

Title page.

Orientalism and Imperialism: Protestant missionary narratives of the 'other' in  
nineteenth and early twentieth-century Kurdistan.

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as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Kurdish Studies

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## Abstract

Through an examination of the letters, reports and published writings of the missionaries of two distinctive Protestant missions active in the Kurdish region during the nineteenth century, this thesis explores the Orientalist and imperialist qualities of missionary knowledge production. It demonstrates the diversity of Protestant missionary thought on the subject of the Orient and the individual nature of missionary knowledge production during this period. Equally importantly the study allows for a critical examination of the Orientalist critique in the context of missionary activity and a contextualised assessment of missionary complicity with imperialism.

The findings of the study show that the Orientalism of the Anglican 'Assyrian Mission' and that of the American Presbyterian 'West Persia Mission' share common characteristics but, importantly, diverge diametrically in the meanings ascribed to the differences perceived to separate 'Oriental' from 'Occidental'. This diversity in the representative style of the two missions can be linked to their opposed objectives in relation to proselytisation and thus suggests that their knowledge production was not solely determined by Orientalist discourse but also influenced by other discursive factors. Given Edward Said's recognition of the diversity of the phenomenon of Orientalism it is therefore of great value to attempt to map some of this vast and divergent terrain of ideas. My thesis thus suggests that a meaningful division can be made within the Orientalist discourse between expressions of an Orientalism of *essential difference* and that of an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference*.

Concerning imperialism, the study argues that, although these missionaries can be considered imperialists in an unwitting and indirect sense, care needs to be taken in the application of this label. My argument is that association with and contribution to textual attitudes which promote ideas of ontological or cultural superiority are a very different activity to conscious engagement in projects of imperial expansion; and that this needs to be recognised. Furthermore the standard model of a political metropolitan center determining the fate of its activities in the periphery is reversed in the case of these missionaries, where religious concerns drove engagement against political interests.

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Page 79	Map commissioned by Athelstan Riley circa 1886 showing the location of the mission field within the region.
Page 80	Map commissioned by Athelstan Riley 1886 showing names of towns and tribes within the mission field.

## Chapter One. Introduction

### 1.1 Theoretical model

The basic objective of this thesis is to examine critically, by way of case study, whether Protestant missionaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries can be categorised unambiguously as Orientalists, as some historians have done, and equally to investigate whether these missionaries can be considered to be the agents of imperialism.<sup>1</sup> My interest in this subject was initially sparked by the observation that two specific missions, both of which were Protestant, seemed to operate and express themselves in significantly different ways from one another in their missionary engagement with the same geographical location. It also seemed to me that neither mission conformed to my own *a priori* notion of the 'imperialistic Orientalist' as evoked by the works of Edward Said and subsequent scholars whose work will be discussed below.<sup>2</sup> This observation throws into question the uniformity of the phenomenon frequently referred to as Orientalism and the explicit link which is often held to exist between Orientalism and imperialism.<sup>3</sup> From this interest I have derived the two central research questions which drive this thesis. Firstly, does the knowledge production of these missionaries exhibit an Orientalist style, and if so what form does this Orientalism take? Secondly, can they be considered to be agents of imperialism? In order to understand and answer these two questions the theoretical model of this thesis derives from my own understanding of the Orientalist critique as proposed by Edward Said, and my analysis of the research data acts as a

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<sup>1</sup> In chapter two I will examine in detail some of the various representations of Protestant missionaries during this period which can be found in contemporary histories concerning the Middle East.

<sup>2</sup> See: chapter two - *Conflicting Interpretations of Missionary Endeavour*.

<sup>3</sup> I will discuss and define the concepts of Orientalism and imperialism later in this introduction, but for the time being Orientalism can be considered as 'a style of thought' which reifies the idea of the relationship between the 'West' and the 'East' in terms of a binary of opposition in which the former is represented as superior to the latter. The critique of Orientalism also asserts a relationship between these acts of representation and the furtherance of imperial interests.

contextualisation of that critique by testing some of its claims in a very specific setting.<sup>4</sup>

My case study focuses upon the archival evidence of two Protestant missions whose activities in the Kurdish region during this period have generated a rich source of data for analysis.<sup>5</sup> The knowledge production of these missionaries includes representations of the region in which they worked, of the peoples who inhabited that region, and of the perceived relationship between these objects of knowledge and the 'West'. My thesis gives greatest attention to the differences between these two missions in terms of their world-views, and explores how their divergent representations of 'Orientals' played into the inter-missionary struggle for influence over the local Christian community of the Old East Syrian Church. The two missions studied in this analysis are the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, and the West Persia Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA). Finally, this instructive and perhaps unique historical drama unfolded in a region known to these missionaries as Kurdistan, and it is thus Kurdistan and its various peoples which forms the particular Orient of their representations. In terms of periodisation, the primary focus of analysis is from the 1870s to the beginning of the First World War; a period roughly corresponding to the Belle Époque of continental Europe or the Gilded Era of America, a time which constitutes the height of European imperial expansion.<sup>6</sup> Prior to engaging in an analysis of the primary data constituted by the personal textual output of these missionaries, which is the main object of this thesis, I will first define my understanding of the paradigm of Orientalism which I shall be using as my theoretical model and through which I shall be analysing the data.

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<sup>4</sup> A full explanation and definition of these concepts will be laid out in the proceeding sections of this introduction; the theoretical model of my thesis is thus based upon a critical understanding of the work of Edward Said as articulated in his seminal work *Orientalism*. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003 [1978]).

<sup>5</sup> The meaning of the term Kurdistan will be fully discussed later in section two of this chapter. See: section - 'Kurdistan', chapter 1.2 - *Historical and Geographical Context*.

<sup>6</sup> Although the work of the Anglican Rev. Badger predates this time frame his work is included for its important contribution to the ethos of the Anglican mission.

## Orientalism and Essentialism

The concept of Orientalism is central to this thesis but the term is potentially ambiguous. On the one hand the word itself can be taken as indicating the esteemed profession of those who simply study the Orient, and whose work does not necessarily conform to the dictates of 'Western' interests. On the other, it can indicate a discursive tradition which represents the Orient as a more or less homogeneous entity with regular and generalisable characteristics, and which does so in a manner that supports the underlying thesis of 'Western' superiority. It is this latter point of view which constitutes the starting point of my theoretical model and which I will refer to as the Orientalist critique.

So, what is meant by a discursive tradition? Jäger and Maier, quoting Jürgen Link, define a discourse as "an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power".<sup>7</sup> A discursive tradition by extension indicates something more attenuated over time and constituting a practice that perpetuates a particular *status quo*. The seminal articulation of the Orientalist critique can be attributed to Edward Said, building on Michel Foucault's concept of the discursive formation, and thus it is in terms of Said's account of the Orientalist discourse that I will further elaborate my theoretical framework.

While, Edward Said has stated that "Orientalism is a partisan book, [and] not a theoretical machine"<sup>8</sup>, it is nonetheless possible to extrapolate a theoretical model from his work *Orientalism*. Firstly, it is my understanding that Said himself would have frowned upon rigid and dogmatic definitions of Orientalism as a phenomenon, for it is not to be conceived of as an ideology or project but rather as an operating force or process active in society. An idea that is most helpful as a starting point in understanding this process is that Orientalism results from "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'".<sup>9</sup> This 'style of thought' takes as its basis the *a priori* notion

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<sup>7</sup> Siegfried Jäger and Florentine Maier, "Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis and Dispositive Analysis," *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* Second Edition, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Mayer (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 35.

<sup>8</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 340.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

that both 'East' and 'West' are in some real sense homogenous geographical units which differ from each other in their very nature. Consequently the rules and standards which govern the representation of the Orient, it is argued, differ from those which are used to represent the Occident. The critique further suggests that this double standard is a crucial tool, though not necessarily a conscious one, in both creating and maintaining the 'otherness' of the Orient. Thus a central point of the Orientalist critique is that it refers to a reification of an abstract idea, used to organise the world into manageable categories, into a real object which explains perceived difference as the result of inferiority.

A striking feature of this process of 'othering' is that, not only does it allow for the easy compartmentalisation of a diversity of individuals and groups into a single homogenous and malleable unit, but it also facilitates the consolidation of a 'Western' self-image. Through comparison with the 'otherness' of the Orient the Occident is itself defined.<sup>10</sup> This *style of thought* is, in part, a way of looking at *objects of thought* and talking about them in terms of the value system of the narrator's own culture.<sup>11</sup> In this sense the focus is less upon what the Orient *is* than upon what the Occident *should be*. This is, however, not to say that either the Orient nor the Occident actually exist in terms beyond the realm of ideas, but, says Said, neither should it be dismissed simply as "an airy European fantasy".<sup>12</sup> Said's argument is that Orientalism as a system of representing the 'other' has real effects, not least in the justification of inequality by recourse to a perceived *essential difference* between the 'Oriental' and the 'Occidental'.<sup>13</sup> This brings us to a concept that I would like to emphasise, that of *essential difference*. I refer here to a style of representation which views the apparent differences between the narrating subject and the 'other' which is the object of description as being due to an intrinsic nature

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<sup>10</sup> Or perhaps redefined, as the fundamental value judgements by which the Orient is measured derive from the culture of the Orientalist and so the process of definition by comparison with the 'other' is a reaffirmation.

<sup>11</sup> I refer here to Michel Foucault's concept of the 'web' or, depending upon translation 'network'. In his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault suggested that by analysing the way in which objects are ordered through language one can discern a system of rules which forms, what he terms, a web or a network. This epistemological system, of which we are normally unaware, places the 'concept of an object' within the frame of a cultural value system by ascribing it a relative meaning. Thus a statement does not only describe an object but rather the relevance of that object within a cultural frame, which is ultimately value laden. See: Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), 45-9.

<sup>12</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> The governance of Indians or Egyptians by ontologically superior British administrators would seem to be a prime example.



which is ontologically fixed.<sup>14</sup> In this way the 'Oriental' is rhetorically rendered irrevocably different from, and usually inferior to, the 'Occidental'. The word 'irrevocable' is central to the notion of *essential difference*. Not only does this style of representation present the 'Oriental' as different to the 'Occidental' but it also explains this difference as being due to a fixed essential nature. This is I think often accepted to be the hallmark of Orientalism, and a defining feature of the phenomenon. This is a point demonstrated by Said's comment that the Orientalist canons, from which those arch-imperialists Balfour and Lord Cromer drew, were considered by them to be "tested and unchanging knowledge, since "Orientals" for all practical purposes were a Platonic essence, which any Orientalist (or ruler of Orientals) might examine, understand, and expose."<sup>15</sup> Equally, Said states that the phenomenon of "Orientalism assumed an unchanging Orient, absolutely different (the reasons change from epoch to epoch) from the West."<sup>16</sup> The importance of highlighting *essential difference* in Orientalist narratives is that it represents the point at which meaning is attributed by the narrator to the perception of difference, where difference ceases to be mere 'observation' and acquires an altogether more judgmental character.

Towards the end of his treatise Said appears to contradict this model of Orientalist thought, which envisions a static Orient, as he describes the ethos behind the imperial administration of India by the British. He states that the "cornerstone of the whole system was a constantly refined knowledge of the Orient, so that as traditional societies hastened forward and became modern commercial societies, there would be no loss of paternal British control".<sup>17</sup> However, far from contradicting the notion of *essential difference* as the cornerstone of Orientalism, this statement alludes to the very crux of essentialist Orientalism. The logic of this essentialist argument is that, although the economies and even the social organisation of Oriental societies may change, the Oriental 'himself' remains what 'he' is. This has a tendency to allow for Oriental attempts at progress to be dismissed as superficial and somewhat falsified copies of an Occidental original. Such a style of representation of the Oriental serves

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<sup>14</sup> A note of clarification is necessary at this point. The concept that I am proposing is more specific than the simple essentialising of the Orient, and is instead a particular mode of essentialism in which the essentialised elements are attributed to an ontological nature which is explained as the cause of the perceived difference.

<sup>15</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 38.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

to manipulate new data to conform to an old paradigm and thus maintain the *status quo* of Occidental superiority over the Oriental. This is, in part, what is meant by the relationship between knowledge production and power, as the practices of Orientalist representation not only justify British imperialism but provide the means by which objection to imperialism can be continually neutralised.

The Saidian paradigm therefore implies that *essential difference* is a defining feature of the Orientalist discourse. This can be seen in Said's declaration that "the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority".<sup>18</sup> In the context of missionaries the problem arises, however, that when one considers the desire to convert the 'Oriental' one is also faced with an ethos which demonstrates a belief that such a distinction *can* in fact be eradicated. This suggests perhaps that something outside the essentialism of the Orientalist discourse is at play in the construction and maintenance of a distinct proselytising missionary world-view. It begs the question as to whether proselytising missionaries could see and articulate a view of the Orient from the perspective of another discourse which did not perceive Orientals as essentially 'other' to Occidentals. The next section of this chapter will therefore expand my theoretical framework to take account of the notion of culture as comprised of a plurality of discourses.

### The Concept of Discursive Interaction

An important element of Edward Said's critique is that Orientalism must be conceptualised as a discourse.<sup>19</sup> In this he recognises his debt to Michel Foucault and the notion of the discourse as both a constraining and a compelling pressure, in the realm of culture, upon what can and cannot be said concerning a field of knowledge.<sup>20</sup> This should not be confused with overt censorship but rather

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Said's reference is as follows: "I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the

understood to exist as a kind of, frequently unconscious, self-censorship. Furthermore, Said suggests that the constraints imposed by such a discourse should not be underestimated, and he goes so far as to assert that “so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that [...] no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by [the discourse of] Orientalism.”<sup>21</sup> This assertion, however, seems to suggest that discourses in general and the Orientalist discourse in particular are deterministic in the regulation of thought and action within society. Robert Irwin, one of Edward Said’s most formidable critics, suggests that this is a central flaw in Said’s theory. While Irwin’s refutation of *Orientalism* focuses upon the indisputable factual errors contained within the book, his criticism also undermines Said’s theory.<sup>22</sup> Irwin argues that Said could not seem to choose between Michel Foucault’s ideas of ‘discourse’ as an irresistible force which determines the narratives produced by Orientalists, and Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemonic narratives which are the product of the volition of elites to regulate the thought and action of subordinates.<sup>23</sup> Irwin accuses Said of playing fast and loose with these two theoretical positions in order to make his point. The weakness of Irwin’s attack, however, is that it is not an illegitimate activity to make use of some aspects of a particular theory whilst selectively dropping others.<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Guhin and Jonathan Wyrzten argue that throughout Said’s seminal work “one sees a constructive tension between Foucault, who argues that the authoritative power structure is unavoidable, and Gramsci, who is more optimistic about the possible uses of positive knowledge.”<sup>25</sup> Their evaluation of Said’s ultimate stance is that:

In Foucault’s model, culture of any sort is fed into a sausage factory of power-knowledge, allowing an ever-deeper consolidation of power. In

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enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, socially, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.” Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Penguin, 2007), 282-84.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 289-90.

<sup>24</sup> Provided that this selection is well theorised.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey Guhin and Jonathan Wyrzten, “The Violences of Knowledge: Edward Said, Sociology, and Post-Orientalist Reflexivity,” *Political Power and Social Theory* Vol. 24 (2013), 249.

Said and Gramsci's model, the sausage factory still exists, and culture can contribute to it, but it doesn't have to.<sup>26</sup>

They conclude by asserting that within the Saidian model a producer of knowledge does have the potential to stand "outside of power".<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, to clarify my own standpoint upon the issue of individual agency it has been useful for me to draw from the discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Later scholars adopted and adapted the Foucauldian concept of discourse and the discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis has emerged in recent decades. In the field of CDA definitions vary but that elaborated by Jäger and Maier corresponds closely to my own understanding and is worth quoting in full at this juncture. To reiterate, they state that "a discourse can be defined as an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power."<sup>28</sup> Furthermore:

This definition can be illustrated by the image of discourse as a flow of knowledge throughout time. Different discourses are intimately entangled with each other and together form the giant milling mass of overall societal discourse. This milling mass of discourse is growing constantly and exuberantly.<sup>29</sup>

From this image of culture, as a 'milling mass' of autonomous discourses which interact through the agency of the individual, one can break free from the determinism implicit in a shallower reading of Said's discourse theory. Said himself is reported by Guhin and Wyrzten as saying that whilst he was writing *Orientalism* he "was already aware of the problems of Foucault's determinism" in which "everything is always assimilated and acculturated".<sup>30</sup> Said continues by stating that the "notion of a kind of non-coercive knowledge, which [he came] to at the end of the book, was deliberately anti-Foucault."<sup>31</sup> To emphasise this point and to highlight the importance of individual volition in the spirit of Said's work one need only point to the introduction to *Orientalism* where Said states that:

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>28</sup> Jäger and Maier, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Guhin and Wyrzten, *Political Power and Social Theory*, 256.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Yet unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism [...] Foucault believes that in general the individual text or author counts for very little; empirically, in the case of Orientalism (and perhaps nowhere else) I find this not to be so.<sup>32</sup>

Abdelmajid Hannoum productively takes this idea of individual agency further by demonstrating that not only do individual authors leave their personal impression on a discourse but that a discourse can be co-opted and implemented to further the objectives of competing social groups within a heterogeneous culture. Speaking of the French colonisation of Algeria in the mid to late nineteenth century, Hannoum relates how the knowledge production of the Arab Bureau with its specific political agenda was co-opted by opposing groups with differing ideas as to the nature of colonisation. He relates that:

for those who later changed their political position, it was already too late, for they established a discourse that they no longer controlled. In fact, it is this same discourse fabricated by the Arab Bureau that was soon appropriated by their opponents, namely the Church and the settlers. The first sought to justify an agenda of religious conversion; the second sought to defend that same policy of containment that the members of the Arab Bureau had once defended so vehemently.<sup>33</sup>

This account suggests that a discourse, while canonising certain data and representations as authoritative, is nonetheless open to modification and redirection. It also underlines the agency of individuals and groups who can use and redirect an existing discourse for their own objectives. In a similar vein, in the field of cultural psychology, Hubert Hermans also argues that cultures are neither homogeneous nor externally distinctive.<sup>34</sup> They are instead, he argues, a dynamic network of individual identity positions which are in a state of constant negotiation; and I would add that, as a consequence of this, the influence of discursive pressures cannot be uniformly

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<sup>32</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 23.

<sup>33</sup> Abdelmajid Hannoum, "Colonialism and Knowledge in Algeria: the Archives of the Arab Bureau," *History and Anthropology* Vol. 12 (2001), 357.

<sup>34</sup> Hubert J. M. Hermans, "The Dialogical Self: Toward a Theory of Personal and Cultural Positioning," *Culture & Psychology*, Vol. 7 Issue. 3 (2001), 266.

exerted throughout a culture and must give rise to individual variance both between and within various discourses. Here can be seen, in the disciplines of discourse analysis, cultural psychology, and history ways of explaining the collective phenomenon of culture in a manner which emphasises the agency of the individual; and this, whilst not eliminating, must nuance the discursive pressures latent within society, culture and the group.

Therefore, throughout this thesis I will refer to the idea of a particular discourse as a collective *influence*, both constraining and creative, exerted unevenly throughout a culture upon the production of knowledge in a particular domain. It is not, after all, possible for human beings to make socially meaningful statements about anything without situating those statements within an accepted framework of understanding, and importantly these frameworks are not neutral in terms of the values they promote and prohibit. While a discourse in this context can be understood as a system of rules which govern the creation of mental objects from the raw materials of the world we experience, these rules themselves should in no way be considered as fixed or immutable. In a somewhat organic sense the very rules constituted by a discourse can be envisaged as being constantly renegotiated, through acts of communication, with the changing environment in which individuals live. The theoretical model which I am proposing thus balances to some extent the collective determinism implied by discursive pressure (which has an *influential* presence in my view) with the agency of the individual, and what is of prime significance to this thesis is that access to alternative discourses can be seen as a significant facilitator of divergence from dominant norms.

The notion of the collision of discursive pressures through the agency of the individual is productively discussed by Daphne Desser in her article *Fraught Literacy*.<sup>35</sup> Her essay concerns missionary involvement in the endeavour to educate the colonised population of Hawaii during the nineteenth century. Her thesis focuses upon the “dynamic of competing desires for connection and separation”<sup>36</sup> felt by female missionary educators toward the Hawaiian objects of their mission. This tension is expressed as a conflict between an ideology based upon biblical texts,

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<sup>35</sup> Daphne Desser, “Fraught Literacy: Competing Desires for Connection and Separation in the Writings of American Missionary Women in Nineteenth-Century Hawai’i,” *College English* 69, no. 5 (2007), 443-469.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 444.

which “foster real and imagined Christian communities that supposedly would transcend race and nationality”,<sup>37</sup> and the racist ethnocentrism of nineteenth-century American culture.<sup>38</sup> One point which Desser makes about this discursive interaction is that the competing and often contradictory values of the two discourses are not necessarily neatly and logically divided. She argues that a “clean binary between connection and separation does not exist. A desire for connection, for example, can be shot through simultaneously with a desire for separation”.<sup>39</sup> This, to my mind, indicates a process of discursive interaction and points to the fact that individual missionaries were actively negotiating, not necessarily consciously or coherently, the conflicting dictates of different discourses through their ability to choose between divergent sets of norms in the construction of unique identity positions.

The importance of this observation to my work is that in the presence of competing discourses the individual narratives of missionaries, as evidenced in their personal writing, may not conform to a single collective narrative. Instead, one may frequently see a convergence of ideas and representations of the Orient which is juxtaposed to sporadic instances of divergent and contradictory thought. There may be a consensus of opinion amongst the missionaries of a particular mission station on a subject against which a single missionary may rebel. What is important in methodological terms is to attempt to gauge a consensus but also to reflect the seemingly aberrant, partly because the very presence of divergent thought goes a long way to erode the notion of discourses as utterly deterministic. In his later work, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said also emphasises the agency of the individual to resist the pressures of the discourse, stating that:

I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history, but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 453.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* Note my distinction between racism and ethnocentrism. It is my understanding that ethnocentrism refers to culture and not necessarily race and I will use the term in this sense throughout my thesis.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), xxiv.

This is a clear indication that Said did not envisage the Orientalist discourse to be an absolutely deterministic force but instead perceived it to be a highly influential form of social pressure which could be resisted.

To return to the question of the domain of competence over which the Orientalist discourse is theoretically supposed to exert its influence, it can be stated that within the Saidian model this domain it is not simply knowledge of the Orient but also the relationship between the Orient and its seemingly natural opposite the Occident. This relationship takes its most concrete form as pronouncements upon the nature of the Orient made by those believing themselves to be Occidentals (most of the time) whose authority is emphasised by the disequilibrium of power between 'East' and 'West'. This is not to say that authority is always dictated by the use or even the threat of force, but rather that the association between the locus of power and the institutions of knowledge production asserts the authority and veracity of the discourse itself. In this way the power of the 'West' is seen to demonstrate the veracity of its knowledge about the 'East'. In a sense that is the point, within the Orientalist discourse the moral and intellectual qualities of the 'West' are understood to have brought about the disequilibrium of power, and thus to challenge the *status quo* is not only foolhardy but also violates the natural order of things.<sup>41</sup> It is argued that these pronouncements upon the Orient frequently take the form of a 'true' understanding of the 'East' which is presented as being beyond the capacity of the 'Oriental' to articulate. This perceived incapacity for logical self-representation not only allows for but demands that the Orientalist must speak for the 'Oriental'. This in turn produces a style of representation of the 'other' which Said has termed *exteriority*, a technique in which the Orientalist narrator must speak for the 'Oriental', often by putting words into the mouths of 'informants', as the only acceptable interpreter of an illogical and emotional realm. An interesting corollary of this expression of Orientalism is that the 'Oriental' is depicted as being incapable of the kind of self-reflection which defines the 'Westerner' and so rational self-knowledge becomes the rightful property of the 'West'; consequently the threat of contestation

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<sup>41</sup> That is to say that the *status quo* of a dominant 'West' determining the fate of an enfeebled 'East' is presented as the result of either the natural racial superiority of Occidentals or as the favour of God towards their fidelity to His cause: or perhaps both.



by the 'Oriental' is neutralised by its status as irrational, illogical and emotional knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

In recent historiography the critique of Orientalism, though by no means universally accepted, has been useful in exposing the myth of the proclaimed neutrality of knowledge production associated with imperialism.<sup>43</sup> The critique has identified a relationship between what could be termed the 'Orientalising' of certain parts of the world and justifications in the application of unequal power. What is less clear, however, is just how consistent and predictable this relationship between knowledge production and power might be. A frequently observable feature of the process of Orientalising has been the organisation of observations into binary categories of opposition which support the principal notion of the ontological difference between 'East' and 'West'. However, to assume that all Occidental authors writing about the Orient did so in a uniformly predictable manner is to create one's own binary category in which the Occident itself becomes a homogenous and generalisable entity.<sup>44</sup> If due care is not taken for the specificity of the particular case in question we risk presenting a picture of the Occident which is as much of a binary caricature as is the particular representation of the Orient which Edward Said had critiqued in *Orientalism*. Furthermore, the assumption of such narrative uniformity amongst Orientalists, without compelling evidence, risks the misinterpretation of historical events and an unsympathetic approach to some of our primary sources.

While, it seems reasonable to suppose that the discourse of Orientalism undoubtedly exerted an environmental pressure upon those who operated within it, the existence of alternative discourses whose domains of competence may have overlapped in the lives of individuals must surely have influenced the narratives expressed by them. What I am proposing here is the existence of a plurality of discourses whose domains of competence are not necessarily discretely delineated but which, as in a Venn diagram, overlap in the experiences pertaining to the individual; this concept can also be found in CDA under the title of discourse position. On this point Jäger and Maier suggest that:

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<sup>42</sup> For Said on exteriority see: Said, *Orientalism*, 20-1.

<sup>43</sup> In particular the genre of post-colonial studies.

<sup>44</sup> Irwin touches on this point when he states that Said is "guilty of racially stereotyping Orientalists and Orientalism." And that "Orientalism has become a reified 'Other'." Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, 291.

Subjects develop a discourse position because they are enmeshed in various discourses. They are exposed to discourses and work them into a specific ideological position or worldview in the course of their life.<sup>45</sup>

In the case of proselytising missionaries it seems reasonable to suggest that they belonged to a culture which was given to an essentialist Orientalism, but it is equally clear that they advocated an egalitarian view of Christianity which contradicted this world-view. Andrew Ross, an expert on the history of nineteenth-century missions, notes that prior to the 1850s “a belief in the oneness of humanity was widespread”<sup>46</sup> amongst Protestant missionaries due to a religious conviction as to “the essential equality of all human beings irrespective of race”.<sup>47</sup> Drawing from the work of Philip D. Curtin, Ross refers to this egalitarian attitude as ‘conversionist’ because of its focus upon global proselytisation.<sup>48</sup> He argues, however, that this situation changed with the rise to popularity of ‘scientific’ racial theories throughout the nineteenth century and the hegemony of a “racial understanding of history and culture”.<sup>49</sup> What is particularly interesting in Ross’s illustration of a changing cultural and intellectual climate, from an egalitarian to a hierarchical explanation of the nature of humanity, is the resistance to popular racism that can be observed. Ross states that “the old conversionist views were not entirely eliminated in the 1890s, but they were going against the stream.”<sup>50</sup> It is thus an object of my thesis to test the notion of *resistance* to culturally dominant discursive pressures by analysing the personal correspondence of the individual members of the Assyrian and West Persia missions. The ‘losing battle’ which Ross describes as being fought by individual missionaries against a popular and political world-view conforms to my theoretical model of individual missionaries negotiating the conflicting imperatives of divergent discourses in the contact zones of their particular mission-fields.

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<sup>45</sup> Jäger and Maier, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 49.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew C. Ross, “Christian Missions and the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Change in Attitudes to Race: The African Experience,” *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914*, edited by Andrew Porter (Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 87.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

Edward Said also suggests the influence of outside elements upon the discourse of Orientalism when he discusses the effects of what he calls 'strong ideas' upon Orientalist expression. He proposes that although ostensibly focused upon depicting the nature of the Orient, Orientalism was principally concerned with articulating aspects of 'Western' thought and values. He underlines this as follows:

Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West. Thus the history of Orientalism has both an internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships to the dominant culture surrounding it.<sup>51</sup>

He continues by saying that "Orientalism borrowed and was frequently informed by "strong" ideas, doctrines, and trends ruling the culture."<sup>52</sup> Orientalism was thus subjected to "imperialism, positivism, utopianism, historicism, Darwinism, racism, Freudianism, Marxism, [and] Spenglerism".<sup>53</sup> This is an important point because it seems to relegate imperialism from being coterminous with Orientalism to merely an idea or a ruling cultural trend which informed it. Said does not suggest that these doctrines constituted separate discourses and this would seem to present a picture of the discourse of Orientalism as a more or less monolithic structure which merely responded to changing trends. Said does, however, state that due to these influences "there was (and is) a linguistic Orient, a Freudian Orient, a Spenglerian Orient, a Darwinian Orient, a racist Orient – and so on."<sup>54</sup> This would seem to present Orientalism, not as monolithic, but as multi-faceted and even perhaps as fragmented into various discursive strands. This more nuanced appreciation of Said's theory of Orientalism is also mentioned by Guhin and Wyrzten who argue that:

it is in Gramsci that Said finds a balance between Matthew Arnold's positive view of culture and Foucault's suspicion of culture's

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<sup>51</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 22.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

relationship to power: [saying] "...as Gramsci is everywhere careful to note, cultural activity is neither uniform nor mindlessly homogenous."<sup>55</sup>

With this in mind it seems reasonable to suggest that the Orientalist discourse constitutes a more fluid and variable phenomenon than would be understood from a superficial reading of *Orientalism*.

It might be added that in this section of his argument Said is not talking about the lived vocations of individuals but is instead discussing the effects of rather abstract ideas. It seems reasonable to suggest that in the case of the missionaries of this study a proselytising Christian ethos would be more than a simple idea or a trend modifying Orientalist thought, and I would argue that it constituted something more akin to a competing discourse in its own right.<sup>56</sup> To those missionaries who wished to convert the 'Oriental' to their form of Christianity their proselytising world-view should perhaps be considered as an alternative discourse which vied with Orientalism in its influence over them and thus impacted heavily upon their representations. Furthermore, none of the *ideas* which Said mentions above challenge the core concept of the "ineradicable"<sup>57</sup> distinction between 'Orientals' and 'Occidentals' in the same way that the egalitarian Christian proselytising ethos does. That is to say, these ideas do not challenge the style of representation which I have termed *essential difference*.

In questioning whether the paradigm of Orientalism is a definitively essentialist discourse or not I do not wish to detract from the utility of Edward Said's critique in identifying a practice which reifies the idea of the Orient and presents it as an ontological reality and a mirror to the Occident. Unlike Robert Irwin I do not see this as a particularly banal endeavour.<sup>58</sup> My intention is to reinforce Said's view that as a phenomenon Orientalism is not monolithic in terms of the vision of the world it both reflects and inspires. Instead I argue that it can be seen as a reactive process which encompasses a diversity of experiences, which can be woven into any number of

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<sup>55</sup> Guhin and Wyrzten, *Political Power and Social Theory*, 256. The authors are here quoting: Edward W. Said, *The world, the text, and the critic* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 171.

<sup>56</sup> In fact, to my mind, it has a rather better claim to be considered as a discourse than the rather abstract notion of Orientalism.

<sup>57</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 42.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Irwin suggests that "If all that Said was arguing was that Orientalists have not always been objective, then the argument would be merely banal." Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, 288.

discursive 'strands' that may compete with and contradict each other without undermining the core principle of the discourse, which is the reification of the idea of the Orient as the natural and inferior opposite to the Occident. The urge underlying this process of representation is perhaps the need to give simplified meaning to bewildering diversity and to emphasise continuity over change, but the fact that Orientalism is reductive in this sense does not mean that the phenomenon can itself be reduced to a single monolithic discursive narrative.

### Introducing the Concept of *Circumstantial Difference*

Although *essential difference*, the notion of the ontological and unalterable difference between 'Oriental' and 'Occidental', is on occasion described by Edward Said as a definitive component of Orientalism it does not seem reasonable to suggest that there were no alternative Orientalist views. Within the textual output of proselytising missionaries, for example, one may expect to see the articulation of sentiments which while being Orientalist, in the sense that they represent the 'East' as a monolithic entity in opposition to an equally monolithic 'West', nonetheless ascribe an alternative meaning to the nature of the differences perceived to separate these two entities. As has been mentioned, within Said's work he argued that the representation of 'the Oriental' as a Platonic essence could be deployed by Orientalists in order to justify systems of oppression.<sup>59</sup> In this way the Orient is presented as unchanging and ineradicably different from the Occident,<sup>60</sup> but the question arises as to whether *all* Orientalists did indeed present the objects of their representations in this manner. In order to check this assumption my thesis will be analysing the way in which Orientals are represented within the textual output of the missionaries of this study.

I have allocated the term *essential difference* to the mode of representation which explains 'Oriental difference' as being due to the fixed and unchanging nature of

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<sup>59</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 38.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

Orientalism. An alternative mode of representation, and not necessarily the only alternative, would be to attribute these perceived differences to the environmental circumstances of Oriental life. Hannoum identifies just such an articulation within the French colonial discourse which he terms colonial heresies, and which he describes as being less essentialist than orthodox representations.<sup>61</sup> Speaking of Pellissier de Reynaud, Hannoum explains that this officer of the Arab Bureau felt humanity to be one unit and that “the differences between societies [were] caused by the differences of their soil and climate.”<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, Hannoum explains, Reynaud was writing within the colonial discourse:

The postulate shared by all the members of the Arab Bureau was that the natives lacked civilization. Divergence occurred in the ways the natives as objects were constructed, seldom in the political solutions offered.<sup>63</sup>

In a similar fashion I am proposing that there exists two opposed styles of Orientalism which have contradictory ideological explanations as to the current state of the Oriental.<sup>64</sup> As with Hannoum’s colonial heresies, the conversionist missionaries do not portray the ‘native’ as the negation of civilization but rather as ‘perfectible’. Hannoum presents the ‘heretical’ explanations as follows:

It is his social organization that caused him to be “plunged into a state of barbarism”, but in any case not because of some “inherent nature”. In other words, the heretical discourse contains the dichotomy “us” and “them”, an anthropological one that, ultimately, presupposes the unity of humanity.<sup>65</sup>

He argues that this dichotomy is not Orientalist because it does not “pose the opposition “West” versus “East” – two entities that mutually exclude each other”.<sup>66</sup> I would argue that it does, though not in an ontological sense but rather in an anthropological one. It is in this view not the ‘Oriental’ which is the negation of

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<sup>61</sup> Hannoum, *History and Anthropology*, 364.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

<sup>64</sup> There are perhaps many more than two variant strands of the Orientalist discourse which could also be analysed.

<sup>65</sup> Hannoum, *History and Anthropology*, 364.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

civilization but the 'Orient' as a social and religious unit which opposes the civilization of the 'West'. In the case of the conversionist missionaries these two opposed styles of representation support diametrically opposed methods of engagement with the Orient but do not undermine the underlying principle that the Orient exists as an oppositional unit to that of the Occident. Therefore, throughout this thesis I will refer to this alternative mode of representation as an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference*: circumstantial because it explains difference as the result of environmental influences upon an essentially common human nature, Orientalist because it nonetheless represents the idea of the Orient as a real geographical space in which one can legitimately generalise about customs and mentalities which are different and often opposed to those of a putative 'West'.

The first goal of this thesis is, therefore, to explore the Orientalism displayed in the textual output of both the Anglican and American Presbyterian missions and to analyse this data as to its style of representation; and this will be done in chapter three of my thesis. In this way it can be determined whether the Orientalist style of these missionaries conforms to that of an essentialist Orientalism or whether it diverges to give the alternate style of representation which I have termed *circumstantial difference*.<sup>67</sup>

### Imperialism in Theoretical Terms

The preceding sections have provided the theoretical tools with which to approach my first research question which addresses the subject of Orientalism; this section presents the theoretical framework necessary to address the second research question which concerns imperialism. The concept of imperialism is, however, closely connected to Orientalism in my thesis and there is a large degree of overlap between these two concepts. In fact many scholars have insisted that imperialism is the primary issue at stake in Edward Said's critique. In an article exploring the

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<sup>67</sup> Or indeed, whether their expressions do not fit into either of these two convenient categories.

meaning of Edward Said's work in relation to his political engagement, Professor Nadia Abu El-Haj speaks of the different levels on which the critique of Orientalism can be read. On a very general level, she explains, Orientalism is concerned with what might be termed 'representation', a very broad engagement with "the question of how human societies distinguish between selves and others and with what consequences."<sup>68</sup> This is how I have outlined Orientalism in the preceding sections of this chapter, and such a reading is not primarily concerned with locating the connection between 'representation' and imperialism but with exploring the characterisation of the Orient and its peoples. Professor Abu El-Haj, however, argues that such an interpretation misses the main objective of Said's work, explaining that:

The problem of representation as elaborated by Said in *Orientalism* is, thus, better understood as inseparable from the context of empire and the relations of power and subordination entailed therein. He sought to understand how, in the context of specific historical encounters between Europe and the Arab Middle East, representing Otherness – demarcating the difference between East and West, between Christianity and Islam – generated imperial power in the West and helped to elaborate the patterns of thought and culture that made that imperial endeavor imaginable, sustainable, and quite centrally, (morally) "good."<sup>69</sup>

I would venture, however, that we need to be cautious as to what message is taken from the statement that Orientalism 'generated imperial power'. While Orientalist representations can be seen to support imperial projects and even to facilitate the underlying thirst for imperial power, it should not be assumed that imperial power is simply the product of Orientalist ideas alone; the will to power is surely also the result of other personal and collective interests. To assume that the Orientalist discourse alone determines the power of an empire would be to invoke a Foucauldian

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<sup>68</sup> Nadia Abu El-Haj, "Edward Said and the political present," *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*, edited by Ian Richard Netton (London; New York: Routledge; Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), 58.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 59. While I agree with Nadia Abu El-Haj's assessment that this was Said's objective, I think that the claim that representative Orientalism "generated imperial power" needs to be nuanced; and I would point to Robert Irwin's critique of Said's work as a good example of how too literal an interpretation of what is meant by the generation of imperial power can undermine the legitimacy of the critique. Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Penguin, 2007).



determinism quite at odds with the individualism explicit within Said's theory. There are in fact good reasons to suspect that such a direct causal link between representation and imperial power cannot be assumed. Robert Irwin points out what he sees as the inconsistency in Said's argument, this time with regard to periodisation. Irwin suggests that in trying to demonstrate the ancient roots of Orientalism, Said is attributing a style of representation which is intrinsically linked in his theory to domination and supremacy to a time when the 'West' was in fact itself dominated by the 'Orient'. Irwin writes that:

The chronological issue is of some importance, for if Aeschylus, Dante and Postel are to be indicted for Orientalism, it follows that the necessary linkage between Orientalism and imperialism that Said posits elsewhere cannot be true. Until the late seventeenth century at least, Europe was threatened by Ottoman imperialism and it is hard to date Western economic dominance of the Middle East to earlier than the late eighteenth century.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, Irwin argues, the dominance of German academics within the field of Orientalism, with Germany's corresponding lack of an Oriental empire, flies in the face of the idea that Orientalism generated imperial power.<sup>71</sup> This criticism, however, would only be true if we perceive Orientalism in the light of a deterministic discourse in which the individual has no volition, but as has been pointed out this is not Said's view. Instead the influence of Gramsci upon Said's theory suggests a different reading in which attitudes conditioned by a hegemonic discourse in conjunction with opportunity and individual volition combined to give rise to imperial power. This more nuanced reading implies that expressions of Orientalist thought can never be entirely uniform and without exceptions and defiances. Furthermore, with regard to the chronological issue, Said is clear that from the end of the eighteenth century, starting with Napoleon's invasion and the cataloguing of Egypt as an object of study, Orientalism as a phenomenon became qualitatively different from its previous incarnations. Central to this change is what Said refers to as success, or the apparent success of encountering an Orient which seemed to conform to Orientalist stereotypes of its inability "to resist the projects, images, or mere descriptions

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<sup>70</sup> Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, 285.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 286-7.

devised for it.”<sup>72</sup> This situation, of an increasingly powerful Europe, led to an increase in access to the ‘Orient’ and a demand for knowledge which depicted an ‘Orient’ that could be dominated. This intensified throughout the following decades, and in Said’s words:

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Orientalists became a more serious quantity, because by then the reaches of imaginative and actual geography had shrunk, because the Oriental-European relationship was determined by an unstoppable European expansion in search of markets, resources, colonies, and finally, because Orientalism had accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse to an imperial institution.<sup>73</sup>

I draw attention to the two-way flow of causality in this account; imperial expansion generates the opportunity for a new form of Orientalism and this modern Orientalism facilitates greater power and so forth in a mutually reinforcing spiral of consolidation of both power and knowledge appropriate to power. My point is that this complicates the idea that Orientalism generates imperial power and emphasises the necessity of practical opportunities which must be present in combination with Orientalist textual attitudes for such power to be enacted. This does not contradict Professor Abu El-Haj’s assertion but I hope clarifies the point against a simplistic reading of a determinist Orientalist discourse which is considered solely responsible for the rise of empires as is alluded to by Irwin.

In order, therefore, to analyse this linkage between Orientalism and imperialism it is first necessary to define the concept of imperialism more closely. Said himself states that imperialism is “a word and an idea today so controversial, so fraught with all sorts of questions, doubts, polemics, and ideological premises as nearly to resist use altogether.”<sup>74</sup> In this thesis I wish to avoid the assumption that Orientalism as a style of representation necessarily equates directly to an act of imperialism and instead to suggest that the association with imperialism can be more attenuated, and furthermore to underline that this distinction is an important one.

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<sup>72</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 94.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>74</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 3.

Taken as an ideology, imperialism can perhaps be considered as the notion of the acceptability, or even desirability, of the rule of one people by another through occupation and/or influence.<sup>75</sup> Said's definition expresses imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory"<sup>76</sup> which can be "achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence."<sup>77</sup> This definition, however, needs to be refined further for the specificity of the particular case of my analysis and simultaneously broadened to allow for the possibility of more complex flows of knowledge.

First of all it is necessary to define periodisation more closely. My thesis is limited to the concept of imperialism in the High Imperial era of European expansion from the latter part of the nineteenth century (circa 1870 onwards) to the beginning of the First World War. The reason for this choice is that it presents a period in which the expansion of European empires reached its most fervent pace, and a time in which the cultural self-confidence of Europeans and Americans was axiomatic. During this period, therefore, one might expect to see less ambiguity in expressions of imperialism for the simple reason that those empires seemed to be at their most secure and optimistic. Andrew Porter describes the period between 1880 and 1914 as follows:

Even those who question whether this period really witnessed a "new imperialism" can accept that these were years of hectic European territorial expansion. Most contemporaries [...] had no difficulty in agreeing that imperial preeminence reflected Britain's racial and cultural superiority. Many felt that preeminence and singular privilege in turn carried with them obligations to weaker and less favoured societies, not least the duty to civilise and convert to Christianity.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Edward Said gives an example of this when he quotes Lord Cromer as saying "the real future of Egypt ... lies not in the direction of a narrow nationalism, which will only embrace native Egyptians ... but rather in that of an enlarged cosmopolitanism." Said, *Orientalism*, 37. So, being ruled by a foreign power is presented as engaging in an enlarged cosmopolitanism, implying all sorts of freedoms and liberties but ultimately denying 'Orientals' the opportunity of deciding their own fate.

<sup>76</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Andrew Porter, "Introduction," *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914*, edited by Andrew Porter (Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1-2.

The focus of my thesis, therefore, is upon this period in history when the imperialism of the European powers was at its height and the rhetoric of civilizational superiority was at its most unapologetic.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, it coincides with the establishment of formal Anglican mission (1881) and the moment when the West Persia Mission became officially a solely Presbyterian affair (1871) with a more strident policy of proselytisation.<sup>80</sup> In ideological terms, the imperialism of this epoch presented the domination of the non-European world as being in its own interest due to its inferior status, but this still leaves the question of how to measure the degree to which Protestant missionaries can themselves be considered agents of imperialism.

On the most superficial level one can look at the structure of missionary organisations in order to determine the way in which they derived funding and decided upon action, and thus the degree to which political or economic forces influenced mission. This assumes imperialism to be an essentially political phenomenon in which missionaries can be co-opted to pursue the interests of the state. On a more nuanced level one can analyse the textual output of individual missionaries for evidence of a sentiment of a pro-imperial nature, in a situation where missionaries contribute to a mentality which supports the expansion of these political empires. In this respect Edward Said argued that narratives have a central importance in the furtherance of imperialism, stating that:

The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, by examining the narrative meaning presented within the representations of the Orient made by the missionaries of this study it should be possible to determine their contribution to this process of preparing the way (or perhaps one should say preparing the mind) for imperialism. A further and more nuanced charge which can be levelled against missionaries, however, is that by propagating the

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<sup>79</sup> The exception to this is the works of the Anglican Rev. Badger who was writing in the late 1850s, but it is necessary to include Badger as his ideas have an influential effect upon the ethos of mission which is crucial to an understanding of the mission's purpose.

<sup>80</sup> For more on the two missions see: chapter 1.2, section – *The Two Missions of this Study*.

<sup>81</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xiii.

culture of their home countries in foreign lands they were guilty of *cultural imperialism*. In this way I have created three categories of imperialism; in the first case an uncomplicated notion of missionaries as political agents of imperial power, in the second case that of conscious advocates of a pro-imperial sentiment which appears within their narratives, and in the third case that of conscious or unconscious agents of cultural imperialism. There is, however, nothing simple about the concept of cultural imperialism and a comment seems necessary to place my analysis in context.

In relation to this phenomenon John Tomlinson states that the problem for the analyst is “that ‘cultural imperialism’ is a generic concept, [which] refers to a range of broadly similar phenomena. Because of this it is unlikely that any single definition could grasp every sense in which the term is used.”<sup>82</sup> I would add that it can also be a deeply subjective term which may be used by an author to provoke an emotional response in the reader. To label non-violent and non-coercive acts as cultural imperialism is to invoke an implicit connection between such acts and the overtly violent and coercive processes of political, economic, and military imperialism or colonisation. The key effect of this association is that dominance and an allusion to the forced imposition of cultural uniformity can be insinuated without recourse to specific evidence; such an association, however, seems unreasonable in cases where no conscious plan to coerce can be demonstrated. As Tomlinson puts it “what could it mean to speak of a practice people seem to *choose* to engage in [...] as [being] a form of domination?”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, it seems to me to be problematic to use the term ‘cultural imperialism’ in the absence of the kinds of overt coercion that one normally associates with formal empires and colonisation, perhaps a better label for the non-violent and non-coercive dissemination of culture would be *cultural exportation*.

When one thinks of cultural imperialism perhaps the most clear-cut example is that of the French case in reference to the colonisation of Africa, where a state attempted to impose the secular values of the home nation upon ‘its’ colonised peoples through

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<sup>82</sup> John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism: a critical introduction* (London; New York: Continuum, 2002), 2-3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

the control of state institutions.<sup>84</sup> Speaking of the period following 1903 in West Africa, Tony Chafer describes the system as based upon a “decision to make education a central arm of colonial policy through the establishment of an official school system which would service the needs of the colonial administration.”<sup>85</sup> The most important features of this example are those of coercion and the suppression of choice. It is perhaps tempting to use the concept of cultural imperialism in a more diluted sense where no colonisation has occurred and where physical or economic coercion is impossible, but in such a context cultural imperialism would seem to be reduced to the dissemination of cultural values appropriate to one culture amongst another. The problem with such an attenuated definition is that, in the absence of coercion, the concept breaks down to a situation in which the exchange of cultural modes of thought and action appear to be voluntary. Furthermore, the use of the concept of cultural imperialism in such a diluted sense has a tendency to invoke a somewhat Cartesian notion of cultures as monolithic and homogeneous.<sup>86</sup> New approaches to cultural studies, and in fact Said’s own work,<sup>87</sup> have advanced the notion of culture as decentralised and dynamic where interactions in the contact zones at the edges of cultural influence are far more complex than a simple domination of one generic type by another.<sup>88</sup>

There exist, however, more complex and subtle interpretations of Said’s theory than the above, and these outline differing levels by which knowledge production itself risks inflicting both real and symbolic violence upon the objects they claims to represent. Guhin and Wyrzten explain that both “Gramsci and Foucault ably demonstrate how power is essentially about violence, particularly if violence is understood as the coercion of body and mind.”<sup>89</sup> Symbolic violence in Guhin and Wyrzten’s analysis can be theoretically understood to exist in three broad categories;

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<sup>84</sup> See: Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1893-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

<sup>85</sup> Tony Chafer, “Teaching Africans to be French?: France’s ‘civilising mission’ and the establishment of a public education system in French West Africa, 1903-30,” *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* Anno. 56 No. 2 (2001): 193.

<sup>86</sup> By Cartesian I mean the dualistic notion of cultures as independent and hermetically separate entities, similar to the idea of the self and other as proposed by Rene Descartes, and I am borrowing the term from Hubert Hermans (see below).

<sup>87</sup> See above quotation where Said refers to Gramsci’s theory in which “cultural activity is neither uniform nor mindlessly homogenous.” Edward W. Said, *The world, the text, and the critic* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 171.

<sup>88</sup> I am drawing here from the concept of the ‘dialogical self’. See: Hermans, *Culture & Psychology*, 243–281.

<sup>89</sup> Guhin and Wyrzten, *Political Power and Social Theory*, 234.

the violence of essentialisation, epistemic violence, and the violence of apprehension. The violence of essentialisation “involves a misrecognition in which essentialized, ahistorical categories and labels are used to classify the other and then to potentially enact physical and psychological violence upon them.”<sup>90</sup> Epistemic violence refers “to a process in which Western forms of knowing [...] preclude or destroy local forms of knowledge”.<sup>91</sup> Finally, the violence of apprehension “applies to research that avoids the dangers of binarism or generalization intrinsic to essentializing and epistemic violences”<sup>92</sup> but which nonetheless “can still be used directly and indirectly to consolidate power and to enact physical and symbolic violence on the “other””.<sup>93</sup> This final category, the violence of apprehension, alludes to the production of knowledge within a field of power which then feeds into systems of oppression and domination. Guhin and Wyrzten suggest that:

In later writings, Said acknowledges that an Orientalist critique based on a straightforward power motive, for example, that Europe wants to dominate the Orient and produces whatever forms of knowledge necessary to achieve that goal, is simply too simple. [...] The problem was not that all of the knowledge was wrong. The problem was what “accurate” knowledge was used to accomplish synchronically and what it fed into diachronically.<sup>94</sup>

The important aspects of this theoretical model to my own analysis is that it highlights how the relationship between representation and imperialism, that between knowledge and power, can be both unintentional and involving subtle forms of coercion beyond the realm of physical violence. It also leads to a questioning of the possible chain of causality in which political actors are assumed to consciously co-opt non-political actors to produce knowledge which furthers an explicitly political imperialism. Instead the production of knowledge within a field of power by non-political actors becomes unintentionally enmeshed with the processes of imperialism producing a consolidation of power by marginalising other forms of knowledge. The problem that this poses when talking in terms of imperialism is that it necessarily

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* Guhin and Wyrzten referring here to the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

broadens the concept from a conscious and intentional act to one in which the unconscious and the unintentional play an equal or even a greater part. This means that when talking in terms of agents of imperialism we necessarily need to include those who unwittingly played their part in the expansion of empire and who may even have consciously resisted the furtherance of political empire and opposed colonial projects. Nonetheless, while making this connection is of great importance, it is of equal importance to make the distinction between the witting and the unwitting because to fail to do so risks projecting a wholly inaccurate notion of imperialism as simply a great conspiracy rather than a process in which conscious machination and unconscious complicity combined (and as Said points out, still continues to do so)<sup>95</sup>.

So, how does this relate to missionaries? The next sub-section will discuss the way in which the Saidian critique has a tendency to project Protestant missionaries as an abstract notion embodying this more attenuated concept of cultural imperialism and how this can have a tendency to produce an altogether unrealistic image of their conscious and active pursuit of imperial power.

### Missionaries in the Context of Imperialism

While my thesis draws upon Edward Said's *Orientalism* for its theoretical underpinnings there seems to me to be a problem with the simplistic assumption that missionaries as Orientalists are consequently imperialists in a straight-forward sense. What seems to me to be important here is to be precise about what is meant by the term 'imperialist', and also to recognise that missions are not all the same in terms of their associations with imperial power. In *Orientalism* Said's brief presentation as to the nature of missionaries seems to suggest a conscious collaborative role between religious mission and the colonisation of the Orient. He says this of the connection between mission and empire:

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<sup>95</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, xv.



To colonize meant at first the identification – indeed, the creation – of interests; these could be commercial, communicational, religious, military, [or] cultural. With regard to Islam and the Islamic territories, for example, Britain felt that it had legitimate interests, as a Christian power, to safeguard. A complex apparatus for tending these interests developed [and] these missions “openly joined the expansion of Europe.”<sup>96</sup>

It is not entirely clear in this statement as to what Said means by the word ‘missions’, whether the term applies to non-religious and political mission or purely religious mission has considerable ramifications and the failure to distinguish the two is itself perhaps significant. The ‘complex apparatus’ referred to does, however, seem to allude to the growing number of autonomous and largely non-political societies which sprang up throughout the nineteenth century to fund religious mission. The fact that no clarification is forthcoming gives the impression that the differentiation is not significant in Said’s analysis and that he does not see religious mission as exceptional in its ethos and conduct to that of political mission. The logic, and in particular the relationship of causality, in this assessment of missionary activity in Islamic territories suggests that the ‘desire for colonisation’ preceded and drove the creation of ‘interests’. If we view imperialism as a political and conscious activity then the image generated by this explanation is that these interests were thus created for the purpose of political exploitation with an almost Machiavellian collective-will which subsumes the individual agency of missionaries and ignores the frequently anti-imperialist ethos of many Protestant missionary organisations.<sup>97</sup> While governments clearly created interests to further their political objectives it does not follow that the existence of protégé communities necessarily represents the explicit creation of an ‘interest’ for a political goal. This characterisation of religious missions as imperial interests is significant because it implies that the motivating force behind them is expressly logical and political. To accept this portrayal of religious missions in the expansion of empire one would have to assume that British missionaries cynically accepted and pursued British governmental policies and thus acted as proxy agents

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<sup>96</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 100. Said here quotes: A. L. Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine, 1800-1901* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 5. A rather contestable source: see Irwin.

<sup>97</sup> See for example: Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise Since 1700* (London: Routledge, 2008), 121, 152-6 and 166-7.

for the British government. If this were the case then the record of such a sentiment would be evident in the textual record of their knowledge production, which would thus seem to be a worthwhile body of evidence to check for such overt collaboration.

An alternative reading of the relationship between religious missions and empire would be that political agents were altogether more pragmatic and opportunistic. In this reading the creation of religious missions for motives of a personal or religious nature could be selectively co-opted by political actors for the purpose of gaining political leverage over the Islamic territories thus giving those missions the appearance of political agency. The knowledge production of these missions and their physical presence in Muslim lands thus falls into Guhin and Wyrzten's category of the violence of apprehension where knowledge is used by a third party to further processes of imperialism. It seems reasonable to state, as Said does, that "standing near the center of all European politics in the East was the question of minorities, whose "interests" the Powers, each in its own way, claimed to protect and represent."<sup>98</sup> But to infer that missionaries were thus the unambiguous tool of those Powers, as Said seems to be doing in the above quotation, and to suggest that they shared their political interests is a rather surprising assumption and seems to be at odds with Said's more nuanced approach elsewhere.

Said's overall argument, however, is more subtle and less deterministic than this. In relation to academic Orientalism he proposes that even those European writers, such as Richard Burton, for example, who were somewhat beyond the orbit of direct political influence and who expressed an individualistic notion of the Orient were, nonetheless, working within the environment of the Orientalist discourse.<sup>99</sup> In order that their work would be accepted as authoritative they were obliged to take into account previous assumptions about the Orient and thus to produce work which conformed to the demands of a generally imperialistic style.<sup>100</sup> Said's argument is that to the Orientalist:

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Francis Burton was a famous English explorer and Orientalist of the nineteenth century. Said says of Burton that in "no writer on the Orient so much as in Burton do we feel that generalisations about the Oriental [...] are the result of knowledge acquired about the Orient by living there, actually seeing it firsthand, truly trying to see Oriental life from the viewpoint of a person immersed in it." Said, *Orientalism*, 196.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-7.

such knowledge of Oriental society as he has is possible only for a European, with a European's self-awareness of society as a collection of rules and practices. In other words, to be a European in the Orient, and to be one knowledgeably, one must see and know the Orient as a domain ruled over by Europe.<sup>101</sup>

That is to say that Orientalists must reflect in their knowledge production the superiority of Europe in order to be acceptable to a European audience; but this ignores the possibility of divergent discourses, and as a conscious action it also downplays the ethical and moral integrity of those Orientalist writers who held divergent views as to the nature of humanity as a whole. This point is nuanced, however, by Said's analysis of Joseph Conrad who he describes as "both anti-imperialist and imperialist"<sup>102</sup> at the same time because "[as] a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them."<sup>103</sup> Here Said is using the term imperialist in two very different modes; one to indicate the conscious wish to dominate the Orient, the other to speak of the unconscious inability to view Orientals on equal terms by those Westerners who encountered the Orient on an altogether more egalitarian footing. In Conrad's case this unconscious inability to perceive the 'native' except through the lens of the Orientalist discourse would lead not only to the violence of essentialism through the inaccurate portrayal of the 'other' but also to the violence of apprehension as his narratives could be used to justify the necessity of the very imperialism he denounced. Not only can missionary activities be interpreted as imperialist in this sense but also their potential to enlist imperial power in the furtherance of their religious aims may even exceed that of overtly political actors. The problem to my mind with this appraisal is the potential for the conflation inherent in using the same term for two very different approaches to the Orient. To label those who fought against imperialism as imperialists does them a disservice and risks the misinterpretation of the Orientalist discourse in an entirely reductive manner.

Obviously, Said's use of imperialism for these opposing modes of engagement with the Orient was deliberately paradoxical and his point was that both lead to violence;

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>102</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xx.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

both symbolic and actual. My objection is not theoretical but linguistic and practical; because figures like Conrad are certainly imperialists in the sense that they are caught up in the process of imperialism but the term itself has undeniable connotations of conscious agency in the pursuit of imperial interests. Therefore, I feel that it is important to make the distinction between the two for the sake of clarity and to more accurately reflect the mind-set of the objects of my study, lest I too commit some violence of both apprehension and essentialisation through this omission.

What is, therefore, crucial in evaluating how we perceive the missionaries of this study in terms of imperialism is a recognition that cultural imperialism can exist not only as a conscious project but also as an unconscious conformity to discursive norms which facilitate the erasure of local forms of knowledge. This unconscious mode of coercion should, however, be clearly indicated as distinct from a more conscious and cynical imperialism. In relation to the apparent ambiguity of missionaries in relation to imperialism, the work of Eleanor H. Tejirian and Reeva Spector Simon is of particular interest, as they state that:

Missionary activity was, by its own description, altruistic, both in the Protestant evangelical efforts to save souls for their own sake and in the educational and medical enterprises it undertook when it became apparent that direct conversion was nearly impossible. However, it has frequently been regarded as part of Western imperialism and colonialism as it evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an enterprise not usually regarded as altruistic.<sup>104</sup>

Some of the ambiguity of these missionary activities can perhaps be understood in terms of their involvement in similar discursive processes to those which conditioned Conrad's inability to view Orientals as equals. Similarly, the altruistic intentions of missionaries can be interpreted in psychological terms as the pursuit of individual validation and self-worth rooted the value systems of their own cultures. What is of prime importance, however, in Tejirian and Simon's work is an appreciation that missionary activity during this period was not monolithic in its character and was

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<sup>104</sup> Eleanor H. Tejirian and Reeva Spector Simon, "Introduction," *Altruism and Imperialism: Western Cultural and Religious Missions in the Middle East Occasional Papers 4*, Edited by Eleanor H. Tejirian and Reeva Spector Simon (New York: Middle East Institute Columbia University, 2002), vi.

frequently at odds with “Western imperial ambitions.”<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, they point out that the activities of missionaries can be seen to have very different outcomes in different locations and seem to inspire contradictory assessments as to their nature dependent upon the focus of the specific analysis. For example:

On the one hand, George Antonios in *The Arab Awakening* credited them with being the catalyst for the emergence of Arab nationalism, which aimed to throw out the Western imperialists. On the other, writers like Edward Said have criticized them as quintessential “Orientalists,” displaying an ethnocentrism and belief in the superiority of the West that appears throughout their writings.<sup>106</sup>

It would seem from this evaluation that the role and character of Protestant missions to the Middle East was a diverse phenomenon and one which implied relationships with the institutions of imperial power which were both ambiguous and unpredictable. As has been shown above with reference to Conrad, however, this ambiguity can be accounted for by the very different modes in which the term imperialist is used to denote either conscious complicity with physical empires or a more nuanced association with cultural norms. Tejjirian and Simon also emphasise that relationships between religious missions and the institutions of political power varied over time and they suggest that periodisation is of great significance.<sup>107</sup> This problem is reduced in my analysis by focusing upon a very specific period in time but nonetheless the analysis of missionary narratives still needs to be sensitive to the possibility of variation in their relationship to imperialism within that time-frame.

### Alternative Perspectives

To broaden the debate upon the nature of Orientalism and its relationship with imperialism I would like to add a couple of points from academics whose

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, vii

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

specialisation is a revisionist approach to the history of the Ottoman Empire. Selim Deringil's *The Well-Protected Domains* takes the debate on missionary imperialism forward by questioning the supposedly supine and inert nature of the Ottoman Empire. His focus is a re-evaluation of the history of the Ottoman Empire during its final thirty years from the perspective of the Ottoman state, and is a work which challenged existing paradigms of Ottoman history. Deringil has much to say about missionaries in general and Protestant missionaries in particular as these were, in his view, the most serious threat facing the legitimacy of the Ottoman government. He describes the danger as follows:

None of the challenges to the legitimacy of the Ottoman state, and all that it stood for, was more dangerous in the long term than that posed by missionary activity. The threat posed by the soldier, the diplomat, the merchant, all had to do with the here and now; the missionaries, through their schools, constituted a danger for the future.<sup>108</sup>

He continues by saying that throughout the world “the missionary appeared as the representative of a superior culture,”<sup>109</sup> a culture which in many ways was seen to be applying its domination over the Ottoman state to achieve its own imperial objectives. The problem for the Ottoman Porte, which was attempting to construct and reinforce a sense of Ottoman ‘nationality’, was its inability to inculcate within its proto-citizenry a uniform notion of identity through education. In this respect it was initially hard pressed even to compete with the educational activities of the European and American missionaries, and so the mission schools “filled the vacuum left by the insufficiency of Ottoman education.”<sup>110</sup> While European missionaries in general constituted a considerable problem for the Ottoman government, Deringil states that the greatest threat came from the American missionaries.

The latest arrivals on the Ottoman scene, this particular brand of New England zealot was to constitute an enigma for Istanbul which only

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<sup>108</sup> Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: ideology and the legitimation of power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 112.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

saw their efforts to educate minorities as an attempt to undermine state legitimacy.<sup>111</sup>

To the Ottoman Porte, therefore, American missionaries were perceived to be imperialists because they undermined state legitimacy and thus were imagined by the government to be part of an undifferentiated 'Western' threat. Interestingly, Deringil relates how the Ottoman consul-general to New York, Munci Bey, perceived the American experience in Hawaii as instructive and portentous. In Hawaii proselytisation and education could be seen to have led to a violent response in the local population which, in turn, had prompted calls by the missionaries for protection in a process which ultimately led to annexation.<sup>112</sup> In the light of such a precedent the American missionaries on Ottoman soil would naturally have been viewed by the Ottoman state as potential political agents. In their eyes the missionary presence must have had the appearance of a religious vanguard to an imperialist and colonialist political interest. The import of this to my thesis is that a judgement based upon the reception of missionary activity by politically interested parties is likely to produce a political representation of the nature of missionaries. The evaluation of missionary intent from an Ottoman perspective is unlikely to differentiate between the political forces of imperial powers and the religious, frequently anti-imperialist, activities of the missionaries. The problem is, however, that such a view tells us more about the perspective of the Ottoman state than it does about the nature of missionary activity. This in turn has led to a more general apprehension of missionary activity as somehow consciously complicit in the imperial machinations and projects of overtly political institutions.

Building upon the work of Selim Deringil, Ussama Makdisi also proposes that the Ottoman Porte attempted to inculcate an Ottoman identity within its proto-citizenry. The upshot of this project was that it developed its own 'Ottoman Orientalism' which differentiated between center and periphery rather than between East and West. Rather than simply reacting to Western Orientalism through an outright rejection of the Orientalist paradigm, Makdisi argues, that Ottoman elites responded by incorporating and redefining Orientalism to suit their own particular situation. He states that:

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

Ottoman reform distinguished between a degraded Oriental self – embodied in the unreformed pre-modern subjects and landscapes of the empire – and the Muslim modernized self – represented largely (but not exclusively) by an Ottoman Turkish elite.<sup>113</sup>

In this way, the centralising Ottoman state can be seen to be Orientalising an ‘uncivilised’ periphery which it intended to bring into the ‘modern world’ through acts of ‘progress’ involving education and political systematisation. This requires, Makdisi suggests, a “complication of the simple dichotomy of Western imperialism/non-Western resistance that has characterized so much recent historiography of the Ottoman and non-Western world.”<sup>114</sup> This ‘complication’ involves, in my view, the acceptance of a diversity of narrative styles all of which correspond to the theoretical model of Orientalism which links representation with imperialism. What can be taken from Makdisi’s argument is that there is potentially any number of variant forms of Orientalism, each with a different association with imperialism. Therefore the Orientalism of missionaries does not necessarily conform neatly to that of diplomats, politicians, historians, rulers of ‘Oriental’ peoples, or the general public at ‘home’; and that missionary expressions of Orientalism have their own particular relationships with imperialism which should be considered in their own context rather than as part of a more generalised ‘European’ nature.

Finally, a more nuanced point can be drawn from the two preceding works, that the nature of missionaries is in part dependent upon the objective of the analysis which seeks to illuminate them. An analysis which focuses upon the development of the Ottoman Empire is compelled to foreground the impressions of those who were in an adversarial relationship with the missionaries, whereas one which focuses upon missionary activity is compelled to give greater weighting to the opinions of the missionaries themselves. This calls to mind the words of the historiographers Spalding and Parker that history “is made by us, not by people in the past nor by the record of their actions.”<sup>115</sup> In this sense it is perhaps salient to accept that there is no

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<sup>113</sup> Ussama Samir Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 107, No. 3 (2002), 769. In this way Makdisi is presenting the concept of Orientalism in the Gramscian sense of a discourse created by an elite as an act of volition rather than the Foucauldian notion of an impersonal determinism.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 768.

<sup>115</sup> Roger Spalding & Christopher Parker, *Historiography: an introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 3.



single Protestant missionary nature which can be rediscovered in the records of their journals, but instead a contemporary meaning which may be assembled and applied to them as they seem relevant to our own experience. What is missing in the present debate, however, over the role of missionaries in the region is an explanation of their ambiguous relationship with 'Western' imperialism. This ambiguity arises, in my opinion, from a lack of distinction between the two modes of imperialism which separate the likes of Conrad from more obvious imperialists with explicitly political agendas. The second theoretical question of this thesis is, therefore, to explore the imperialism of the Anglican and American Presbyterian missions, as evidenced in the textual output of their knowledge production, in the context of an overt imperialism versus a more subtle complicity in processes which Orientalise the objects of narration; and this will be done in chapter four of this thesis.

To recap then, imperialism can be seen from at least two perspectives; conscious involvement in a political project of domination and exploitation, or unconscious involvement in processes which feed a discursive formation supportive of an imperial agenda. The distinction is important because the two modes of imperialism provide very different judgements as to the nature of the actors involved. In this thesis it is accepted that the term imperialist can refer to either conscious agency or unconscious involvement with in discursive processes, but I also maintain that the distinction between these two modes of involvement should be clearly demonstrated in the analysis rather than conflated into one category – even though these two categories may overlap. The next section will discuss and outline precisely how such an analysis will be dealt with in methodological terms within my thesis.

### Methodology and the Research Questions

My thesis consists of two central research questions. The first deals with the relationship between the missionaries studied in this thesis, as expressed in their

textual record, and the Orient in which they worked. The question put in more analytical terms asks whether the literary output of these missionaries exhibits an Orientalist style, and if so what form does this Orientalism take? The second question deals with the ambition expressed by these missionaries to promote the interests of their home nations and the associated desire to disseminate their own culture. This second question more specifically stated asks whether, based upon their own articulations and in the light of their Orientalism, can we consider these missionaries to be agents of imperialism? To answer these questions I have set out to analyse the particular documentary evidence provided by the personal letters and publications of two Protestant missions; the Anglican project known as the 'Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians', and the 'West Persia Mission' of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

My study treats the works of British and American missionaries in the English language because my analysis focuses upon the Orientalism of their textual expression rather than presenting a history of their activities, and is thus an analysis of missionary *representations* of Kurdistan. By focusing upon these archival and published sources as representations, this study seeks to uncover something of the subjective motivation and intent of the missionaries who wrote them rather than attempting to tease-out the objective reality of the events upon which their narratives were based. This method of approaching textual sources as reflective of socially conditioned attitudes, rather than simply the objective record of past events, is an important tool in Cultural History and draws inspiration from pioneering theorists such as Edward Said and Michel Foucault. My thesis is therefore a contribution to the growing body of work within this particular discipline of Historical analysis. In a work charting the development of Cultural History Peter Burke relates that Michel Foucault productively "criticized historians for what he called their 'impoverished idea of the real,' which left no space for what is imagined."<sup>116</sup> At the heart of this critique is the notion that the thoughts and actions of historical actors cannot be fully explained in terms of logical and calculated motivations.<sup>117</sup> Within my methodological model it is therefore an important consideration not to elide logical inconsistencies in the descriptions and judgements made by the informants who contributed to the archives

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<sup>116</sup> Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* Second edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 64.

<sup>117</sup> See also: Peter Gay, *Freud for Historians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 100. Where he describes human action as being frequently explained by historians as purely a consequence of conscious self-interest.

studied, but instead to draw attention to such contradictions as possible evidence of processes through which they attempted to reconcile competing discursive and personal pressures. Through such an examination of their representations of the 'Orient' and of 'Orientals' one can more fully appreciate missionary activity within the context of their own understanding of the world.

My approach to the interpretation of these texts is to see them as evocative of a particular world-view associated with collective modes of thought which seek to categorise and regulate knowledge about the 'Orient'. This approach shares certain similarities to that adopted by Ann Laura Stoler who, writing in reference to the colonisation of the Dutch East Indies, asserts that for her study the "colonial archival documents serve less as stories for a colonial history than as active, generative substances with histories, as documents with itineraries of their own."<sup>118</sup> What is equally important to my thesis, however, is to take account of the variations within such group narratives by recognising and recording divergence from hegemonic norms. My aim is to simultaneously take account both of the pressures of a collective world-view and of the expression of individual sentiments which seem to clash with these hegemonic ideas. An important point made by Stoler which must be borne in mind, however, is that these hegemonic norms are not static themselves and are modified by the changing experiences of the individual colonial officials whose reports make up the archive of her study. Stoler explains it as follows:

Here I treat archives not as repositories of state power but as unquiet movements in a field of force, as restless realignments and readjustments of people and the beliefs to which they were tethered, as spaces in which the senses and the affective course through the seeming abstractions of political realities.<sup>119</sup>

The context of colonial occupation is not identical, however, to that of the missionaries of my study, and this must also be taken into account. In the colonial context the political imperative to coerce the 'native' populations is evident. Equally, the controlling epistemology of a colonial archive promotes the coercion of its authors to produce knowledge which supports and justifies such coercive

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<sup>118</sup> Ann Laura Stoler. *Along the archival grain: epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-3.

practices.<sup>120</sup> In the case of the missionaries of my study, however, there is no evident political imperative to coerce and the pressures “shaping [...] common sense, and [...] reigning in [...] uncommon sense”<sup>121</sup> for such purposes are consequently reduced. That is not to say that there was no controlling purpose to the archives of my own study, and it seems reasonable to assume that the aims of missionary societies influenced the manner in which letters found in the archives were written. Furthermore, the missionaries were subject to social and cultural pressures to conform to hegemonic world-views. The question is to what extent could the competing pressures of alternative discourses of egalitarian fellowship and of personal conscience override these hegemonic narratives of ‘Western’ hierarchy and superiority over the Oriental?

Taking account of the sub-conscious and the non-rational, however, presents problems of its own, not least a lack of psychoanalytical expertise. Nonetheless, the psychohistorian Peter Gay suggests that all historians are to some extent amateur psychologists because they must infer the motives of their subjects on the basis of their own understanding of human nature.<sup>122</sup> Some of the methodological practices which Gay considers to be legitimate for the historian are as follows:

He can interpret dreams, especially if the dreamer has placed them within an associative texture; he can read the sequence of themes in a private journal as though it were a stream of free associations; he can understand public documents as condensations of wishes and as exercises in denial; he can tease out underlying unconscious fantasies from preoccupations pervading popular novels or admired works of art.<sup>123</sup>

Most important of these to the present study perhaps is the missionary desire to rescue the fallen and to live exemplary lives as exercises in self-validation. It is therefore both the declared opinion of these missionaries as to the nature of the Orient and the associations which can be inferred by such declarations which is of

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<sup>120</sup> The aborted career of Frans Carl Valck being a perfect example of such coercion. See: Stoler, *Along the archival grain*, Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>122</sup> Gay, *Freud for Historians*, 12.

<sup>123</sup> Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud: Volume 1, Education of the Senses* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, 8.

interest to my analysis. A further question which is thrown up by the methodology of Cultural History is what is meant by the term culture. According to Peter Burke New Cultural History (NCL) breaks from the notion of culture as confined to the 'high arts' and instead relies upon a more anthropological definition.<sup>124</sup> This definition derives from Clifford Geertz's 'interpretive theory of culture' in which, as Geertz puts it, culture can be seen as:

an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.<sup>125</sup>

This understanding of culture as a useful concept that encapsulates all of the social forces which influence and to some extent constrain thought and action is also discussed by Peter Gay who goes as far as saying that "every human artefact that contributes to the making of experience belongs under this capacious rubric."<sup>126</sup> Importantly, however, Gay cautions against assumptions of the regularity of culture over space and time stating that "culture is more complex, more discontinuous, and more astounding than students of modern Western civilization have recognized."<sup>127</sup>

A further methodological consideration, a notion expressed by Spalding and Parker in an introductory work on historiography and previously mentioned in this chapter, highlights the interpretive role of the historian as not simply revealing the past but as presenting its relevance to the present. They assert that:

History in the historiographical sense is made by us, not by people in the past nor by the record of their actions. Contrary to [...] popular usage, history does not speak to us directly, even if the source is oral testimony.<sup>128</sup>

The standpoint of this methodology is that the world of the past is to some extent disconnected from us, as selections and choices have already been made by our

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<sup>124</sup> Peter Burke, "Overture. The New History: Its Past and its Future," *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* second edition, edited by Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>125</sup> Burke quoting Geertz from his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 37.

<sup>126</sup> Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience*, 4.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Spalding & Parker, *Historiography*, 3.

primary sources as to what is and what is not worth recording. What is therefore important to a fuller understanding of the past is an awareness of the context in which the data was created including the subjective standpoint and world-view of our sources and the background of the informants who bridge the gap between us and that disconnected world. As Burke puts it:

cultural historians need to practise source criticism, to ask why a given text or image came into existence, whether for example its purpose was to persuade viewers or readers to take some course of action.<sup>129</sup>

This is of course particularly true of missionary publications which were designed to elicit support for missionary endeavours, but it is also an important consideration with regard to their personal correspondence as these too can be seen as a more personal form of propaganda in the creation and maintenance of a self-image. With regard to published sources John Tosh also cautions against taking such material on face value, stating that:

the very fact of publication sets a limit on the value of all these sources. They contain only what was considered to be fit for public consumption – what governments were prepared to reveal, what journalists could elicit from tight-lipped informants, what editors thought would gratify their readers, or MPs their constituents. In each case there is a controlling purpose which may limit, distort or falsify what is said.<sup>130</sup>

This is certainly an obstacle if our intention is to determine what actually took place at a certain time and location but if we seek to reveal attitudes, mind sets, and world views, then such bias can actually work in our favour in two ways. Firstly, it can indicate the socially legitimate ways in which objects of knowledge can be categorised and organised within a particular society at a particular point in time. It is often assumed that such controlling purposes are both conscious and logical, but one of the most important ideas proposed by thinkers such as Foucault and Said is that significant controlling purposes shaping thought and action within societies are

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<sup>129</sup> Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 21.

<sup>130</sup> John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: aims methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (London: Longman, 1991), 68.

frequently subconscious, illogical and collective.<sup>131</sup> Secondly, the observable discrepancies between published material and personal documents can help to outline the terrain of a public discourse and lead us to question the degree to which hegemonic discourses are determinative – as opposed to influential. Nonetheless, it is essential that any such attempt to analyse the more subjective motivations and understandings of historical subjects should be based upon rigorous source criticism, as John Tosh puts it:

Before the historian can properly assess the significance of a document, he or she needs to find out how, when and why it came into being. This requires the application of both supporting knowledge and sceptical intelligence.<sup>132</sup>

In the more specific context of my thesis my interest is to explore the knowledge production of the Protestant missionaries of this study in the context of their representation of the Orient and to analyse any divergence from an essentialist style of Orientalism.<sup>133</sup> In order to interrogate this potential divergence I have found it necessary to utilise some of the concepts of CDA. On the basis of the theoretical model outlined above, the Orientalist discourse in the Saidian tradition assumes that what can and cannot be said on the subject of the Orient is limited by an epistemological system. Knowledge production in this view should be constrained by the discourse of Orientalism to the representation of Orientals as being in some way unalterably different from ‘Westerners’. My thesis seeks to test this contention in the specific context of the knowledge production constituted by the archives and published writings of the missionaries who form the focus of this thesis. A point which is raised in CDA, and a point which contradicts an assumption of a uniform predictability within the knowledge production of Orientalists, is that knowledge is contingent not only upon discursive pressure but also upon individual experience. The definition of knowledge by Jäger and Maier is useful to consider at this point:

‘Knowledge’ refers to all kinds of contents that make up a human consciousness, or in other words, all kinds of meanings that people use to interpret and shape their environment. People derive this

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<sup>131</sup> See above: The Concept of Discursive Interaction.

<sup>132</sup> Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 91.

<sup>133</sup> See above sections: Orientalism and Essentialism, The Concept of Discursive Interaction.

knowledge from the discursive surroundings into which they are born and in which they are enmeshed throughout their lives. Knowledge is therefore conditional, i.e. its validity depends on people's location in history, geography, class relations and so on.<sup>134</sup>

This nuancing of collective pressures with personal experience is a notion which is also articulated by Peter Gay in reference to psychohistory, and he states that:

A moral imperative, an aesthetic taste, a scientific discovery, a political stratagem, a military decision and all the countless other guises that ideas take are [...] soaked in their particular, immediate, as well as in their general cultural surroundings. But they are also responses to inward pressures, being, at least in part, translations of instinctual needs, defensive maneuvers, anxious anticipations. Mental productions in this comprehensive sense emerge as compromises.<sup>135</sup>

This implies that a hegemonic discourse like Orientalism is not all-pervasive and all-determining, its power to direct thought and action varies over time and space. To accommodate this, the method employed by this study needs to be sensitive to the identification of ideas and representations which diverge from the expected norms of an essentialist Orientalism. In analysing the missionaries' credentials as Orientalists, therefore, I will be evaluating the messages conveyed by their explanations of the relationship between 'East' and 'West'. These representations are in some sense symbolic in that the descriptive content involves the allocation of the 'Orient' and 'Orientals' into categories of ontological status and moral worth. To put it another way this analysis is an evaluation of a particular facet of the missionary world-view, that which deals with the relationship between Orient and Occident. It is, furthermore, the geographical contact zone of Kurdistan which brings to the fore the dialogical contact zone between an Orientalist discourse and a Christian egalitarian notion of the nature of humanity as being of equal value in moral worth.<sup>136</sup> What is of

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<sup>134</sup> Jäger and Maier, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 34.

<sup>135</sup> Gay, *Freud for Historians*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>136</sup> I refer here to the work on 'the dialogical self' in the field of cultural psychology by Hermans, Aveling and Gillespie. Hermans, *Culture & Psychology*, 243-281. Emma Louise Aveling and Alex Gillespie, "Negotiating Multiplicity: Adaptive Asymmetries within Second Generation Turks' "Society of Mind", *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* Vol. 21 (2008): 1-23.



particular interest is whether these representations correspond to the regularities implied by Edward Said, where Orientalists attribute an essential nature to Orientals.

With regard to the second research question of the relationship between Protestant missionaries and imperialism, the method will once again be an analysis of the knowledge production of these missionaries in terms of their world-views. More specifically my thesis seeks to interrogate the missionaries' own understanding of the relationship between the dominant 'Western' powers and the 'Orient'. Firstly, my analysis seeks to uncover whether there is a direct link between mission and empire through the sending of orders or finance from the centres of political power to the missions in question or whether more complex flows of cause and effect are evident. Secondly, I seek to discern through an analysis of their knowledge production an advocacy by these missionaries of the use of imperial power for the furtherance of political interests in the Orient. These first two questions test Said's definition of imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory",<sup>137</sup> and asks whether more complex relationships existed in the furtherance of imperial power. Whether, that is, the imperial power of the Metropole was directed for the objectives of ostensibly non-political interests emanating from the periphery. Thirdly, and on a more nuanced level, I seek to interrogate whether these missionaries can be considered to be cultural imperialists through either their proselytising or educational activities. I hope to illuminate this latter aspect of the missionaries' potential imperialism through an examination of their own stated understanding of their missionary goals. Furthermore, my analysis seeks to determine any links which might exist between these standpoints on imperialism and the particular mode of Orientalism as identified by question one.

Finally, it will be useful at this juncture to reiterate the technical terms and concepts that I have explained in my theoretical model and which I shall be using in the analysis of the primary data. In chapter three, the first chapter concerned with the analysis of primary data, I will address the first research question of the thesis, which asks whether we can reasonably consider the missionaries of this study to be Orientalists. I have outlined Orientalism as a style of representing the 'other' in which

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<sup>137</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 8.

the 'East' is juxtaposed to the 'West' and in which both of these concepts are imagined as real and homogenous entities. Furthermore, I have identified that a characteristic of Edward Said's theoretical model is the assumption that essentialism, in the sense of positing an essential nature as the cause of the differences separating the Oriental from the Occidental, is a definitive component of the Orientalist discourse. My contention is that Orientalism may also be detected in a non-essentialist form where the meaning of difference is attributed to the effects of environmental circumstances. The importance of this alternative expression of Orientalism is that it suggests an apprehension of the nature of humanity as essentially uniform and consequently breaks down to some extent the barriers separating Oriental from Occidental. I have labelled the two expressions of Orientalism as *essential difference* and *circumstantial difference* respectively, and will analyse the data presented by the two missions individually in chapter three in order to determine whether they fall broadly into one or other of these two categories. I will also speculate as to the connection between these two styles of Orientalism and the opposing methods of missionary engagement adopted by the two missions with regard to proselytisation.

Chapter four is concerned with the second research question, which asks whether we can reasonably consider the missionaries of this study to be imperialists. The constitutive elements of this question are the division of imperialism into three categories; direct activity as agents of political imperialism, the imperialistically supportive practice of writing in a pro-imperial style, and engagement in acts of cultural imperialism. My contention is that, in exploring whether these missionaries should be considered agents of imperialism, attention should be given to the breadth of meaning such a designation can imbue. While it is true that Said's categorisation of Joseph Conrad as an imperialist is valid in the sense that he was caught up in the subconscious processes of imperialism, it is nonetheless of critical importance to make the distinction between such inadvertent imperialism and the conscious advocacy of imperial projects. To be caught up in the processes of imperialism has quite a different status than to be an imperialist in a more literal, active, and conscious sense. Therefore in the case of cultural imperialism I shall be careful to specify the consciousness of agency involved in such a categorisation. Having separately established whether these missionaries can be considered as Orientalists

and as imperialists it will then be possible to discuss the connection between Orientalism as a representative style and imperialism as an act of domination.

### Use of Sources

While the research questions of my thesis address a more general theoretical analysis of the encounter between Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth century and the Ottoman/Persian world, its specific focus is a micro-historical exploration of two particular missions.<sup>138</sup> The missions chosen are important because they share the similarity of being Protestant missions each emanating from a region of the world which they themselves considered to be part of a unit defined as 'Western civilization', and so they make for good comparison. However, their knowledge production and aims were, as will be shown, in many respects diametrically opposed to one another. What makes this comparison of even greater interest is that the two missions actually collided in a rhetorical battle of methods which survives in the archival data of their personal and unedited knowledge production. The theoretical questions therefore derive from an observation of this particular moment in time and space which allows for the reconstruction of an aspect of their respective world-views. Obviously a complete representation of their world-views is beyond the scope of a single dissertation, but it is entirely possible to sketch an outline of those aspects which relate to the perceived relationship between Orient and Occident.

I have carried out this analysis through a broad reading of the personal and published writings of those missionaries who actually worked in the Kurdish mission-field, and through the identification of their styles of representation of the 'other' which is analysed in detail in chapter three. The analysis is pursued through a comparison of their observed representations against the assumed regularities of a hegemonic Orientalist style in which the Orient is perceived as an *essentially* 'other'

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<sup>138</sup> I use here the term micro-historical not in its more refined technical sense as relating to the sub-discipline of historical analysis, but rather to allude to the study of a particular case for its relevance to a wider question.

category to that of the Occident.<sup>139</sup> In order to achieve this objective I have undertaken extended periods of research in the relevant historical archives of these two missions.<sup>140</sup> In the Anglican case the archive is that of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Church, which is held at Lambeth Palace Library in London, and which consists principally of a twenty-four volume file of letters and reports to the Archbishop and a collection of published pamphlets and reports entitled *Assyrian Mission Papers*.<sup>141</sup> The American Presbyterian missionary archive for this period is held by the Presbyterian Historical Society in their collection "the National Archive of the PC(USA)"<sup>142</sup> in Philadelphia.<sup>143</sup> This latter Archive is vast in its scope and rather complex in its organisation, however, the material of significance to this thesis can be found in two main locations; in physical form in Record Group 91 *Iran Mission 1881-1968*, and on various microfilm reels.<sup>144</sup> The bulk of material prior to 1910 is held on these microfilm reels, and very sadly the original documents of this part of the archive have been destroyed.

As was mentioned earlier in the methodology section, in order to analyse the material contained in the archives it is necessary to understand the context in which that material was written. Perhaps the most important consideration is that for the material to exist at all as an organised archive it must have served some original purpose. This is explained well by Ann Laura Stoler who states that "[a]rchivists are the first to note that to understand an archive, one needs to understand the institutions that it served."<sup>145</sup> In the case of her research Stoler's archive served to accumulate knowledge for the purposes of governing the colonial occupation of the 'Dutch East Indies'; and in her opinion the "shaping of common sense, and the reining in of uncommon sense, together make up the substance of colonial governance and its working epistemologies."<sup>146</sup> In this context there is a controlling purpose acting upon the kinds of knowledge appropriate for inclusion in the archive and the manner in which such knowledge can be framed which influences the

<sup>139</sup> See above: chapter 1.1 section - *Orientalism and essentialism*.

<sup>140</sup> About three months of sifting through letters and reports in each case.

<sup>141</sup> See: <http://www.lambethpalacelibrary.org/>. The two archives are entitled *Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Church* (coded AM1-24) and *Assyrian Mission Papers* (coded G3200-1 and G3200-3) respectively.

<sup>142</sup> See: <http://www.history.pcusa.org/>.

<sup>143</sup> The period covered by the archive being 1870 to 1968.

<sup>144</sup> These can be accessed through the two volume indexing system, located on site, for what is referred to as the *Iran Mission*. The index is in the form of two books and does not exist at present in a digital format.

<sup>145</sup> Stoler, *Against the Archival Grain*, 25.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

documents as they are produced by our informants. Nonetheless, Stoler recognises the agency of the individual and analyses the Dutch archive documents “as condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety rather than as skewed and biased sources.”<sup>147</sup> The context of the archives of my own study, however, is radically different to that of the Dutch East Indies, the context is not colonial and the purpose is not governance. This does not mean that there was no controlling purpose which conditioned the types and styles of knowledge production appropriate for inclusion in the missionary archives but it does suggest that we should not assume that such a ‘purpose’ is similar to that of a governmental archive. Nonetheless, an evaluation of the function of the archives would seem to be essential.

The Anglican archive served a two-fold purpose, it provided the information necessary for the logistical support of an overseas mission and it also produced knowledge which could be useful to encourage further donation to the mission. In this archive it is knowledge appropriate to the first of these categories that makes up the bulk of the documentary items. It seems also to have been the responsibility of the ostensible head of mission to write when need occasioned to the archbishop and to include documents pertaining to the ecclesiastical and political legitimacy of the mission. Such knowledge is largely mundane and financial in its character, including costs of buildings and material requirements, and rarely ventures into descriptions or categorisations of ‘Orientals’ or the ‘Orient’. The second category is of more interest to the analysis of this thesis and takes the form of the missionaries’ evaluation of the progress of the mission. These ‘progress reports’ usually took the form of a monthly letter addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and were also frequently authored by the head of mission, although there were often contributions from the other missionaries included within the bundled reports. In this sense the ‘controlling purpose’ of this component of the archive is a desire to demonstrate the necessity of the mission and to highlight its successes, and this can be assumed to give rise to the portrayal of ‘Orientals’ as necessarily ‘in need’ of salvation and assistance. I should add, however, that the missionaries themselves were aware of the positivistic

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

bias of reports ultimately intended for public consumption, as J. F. Coakley remarks quoting Athelstan Riley:<sup>148</sup>

For the pious, simple folk who take great interest in missionary enterprise, but who are entirely ignorant of the circumstances of missionary work, the sun must always shine; a cloud on the horizon is intolerable; this is, as it were, the condition of their support; the result is the issue of reports positively grotesque in their optimism, in which Scripture texts jostle strangely with palpably exaggerated retrospects and forecasts.<sup>149</sup>

From this it seems obvious that the researcher cannot expect an entirely objective report of missionary activity but neither is it likely that the information conveyed would be so distorted as to jeopardise the functioning of the mission. Furthermore, there is little reason to suppose from this situation that the 'controlling purpose' of the archive serves a specifically imperialistic function in the conscious and political sense of that term. Nonetheless, there is a clear incentive for the missionaries to emphasise those aspects of the 'Oriental' condition which they saw as materially and spiritually lacking, and equally to emphasise their own ability to ameliorate this situation given the required resources.

A further archival source used in this thesis for the Anglican mission is that of the *Assyrian Mission Papers*. Ostensibly these are Athelstan Riley's collection of published material designed to promote the public profile of the mission and to prompt donations. To this particular group of sources one should be particularly mindful of Athelstan Riley's own caution as to positivistic bias but it should also be added that the items used in such publications are unedited from the original missionary letters which can be found in the main archive in hand written form. This suggests that the redactive processes in producing such pamphlets was minimal but that nonetheless the missionaries original reports were written in the context of promoting the interests of mission and that this may involve a certain amount of self-censorship.

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<sup>148</sup> Athelstan Riley was an enthusiastic supporter of mission and is described by Coakley as the missions chief publicist in the early days. He was also involved in expeditions to the region early in the mission's development.

<sup>149</sup> J. F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England: a history of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 3.

Another point which Stoler makes is that the organisation of an archive exerts its own editorial effect upon the material stored within it and thus elevates some material to higher importance while demoting other sorts of material to relative unimportance. As Stoler puts it:

Nor were [the colonial archives] to be read in any which way. Issues were rendered important by where they appeared, how they were cross-referenced, where they were catalogued, and thus how they were framed.<sup>150</sup>

This is an important point because, if organisation and cross-referencing can be taken as indicative of a controlling purpose regulating the material contained within the archive, an understanding of such organising principles can help to decode the documents themselves. Unfortunately, in the case of the Anglican archive the original organising principle cannot be known because of the manner in which this information has come down to us. Coakley explains:

These papers are now arranged chronologically in twenty-four bound volumes, but during the years of my research they were contained in seventeen boxes, of which the first eleven, including by and large everything up to 1908, were in the same state (though perhaps dustier) as when their contents of odd bundles and loose papers were piled into them in the 1930s.<sup>151</sup>

This leaves us with little to be said in terms of the original structure of the archive but, seeing as the system of communication between mission station and the Archbishop seems to have been one of a straightforward letter and response, there is every reason to suppose that the archive was always of a simple chronological structure. In the absence of such structuring there would be little pressure to modify reports to suit the requirements and limitations of a more specific system.

The American Presbyterian archive shares a similar dual purpose to that of the Anglican archive, in that it relates the financial and practical requirements of the mission and also serves to document the progress of the mission's successes and

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<sup>150</sup> Stoler, *Against the Archival Grain*, 50.

<sup>151</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 6.

failures. Once again there is an easily detected optimism to these accounts which unwaveringly paints as positive a picture as possible while presenting justifications of the missions presence through the portrayal of the perceived 'spiritual poverty' of the 'Orientals' to whom they have come to minister. The American archive differs qualitatively, however, from the Anglican archive. The general tenor of the Anglican archive gives a very business-like feel to the communications which are very obviously aimed at the Archbishop himself, whereas the American archive letters have a far more personal feel to its mode of expression which leads to a greater degree of description and judgement of the 'Orientals' with whom they deal.

The bulk of the American archive is kept on micro-film and is comprised of chronologically listed reports, mostly personal letters to the Board of commissioners, with no other organisational structure or indexing. The surviving physical archive, pertaining to 1911 onwards, is comprised of largely personal reports but also contains committee reports and more focused individually authored reports pertaining to specific subjects such as education, civil conditions, or Medical work. This begs the question as to whether the transfer of data from physical documents to micro-film was a redactive process in which the organising structure was lost, but unfortunately there is now no way of knowing this. The organising structure of the remaining physical archive does divide the personal letters and reports, which are usually written as a free flow of events in chronological order, from the more technical issues and this emphasises that the personal reports and letters served largely as a kind of journal entry. The controlling purpose of the archive therefore was, beyond the representation of the day to day functioning of the mission, supportive of their millennialist objectives. It is a noticeable feature of these letters that they frequently serve not only to increase knowledge of the 'Orient' but also to restate the mission's purpose. It can, therefore, be stated that such knowledge was shaped by the predispositions of a seemingly uncompromising religious certainty and a cultural bias which sought to continually restate and reinforce its *raison d'être*.



Furthermore, an understanding of the purpose of the American archive and its function can be augmented by the work of Hutchison and his analysis of the American missionary “errand ideal”.<sup>152</sup> Hutchison states that the missionaries:

were obligated to report back to the home churches. This was not merely to inspire or shame those who stayed behind, or to assure them the job was being done; it was also because the missionaries were considered important to the renovation of their own churches and society.<sup>153</sup>

In this way the function of the archive, and thus the tenor of the descriptions contained therein, were focused upon the ideals and self-image of the sending churches as much as they were upon the nature of the objects of their description.

On a more practical note, while it was possible to scan-read the archive of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Mission for the period 1870-1914, including the main archive and the *Assyrian Mission Papers*,<sup>154</sup> the scale of the Presbyterian archive was prohibitive. Having initially fully investigated the surviving physical archive, which covers the period 1908 to the First World War,<sup>155</sup> I then discovered a far more sizeable microfilm archive of mission correspondence dating back to 1870. In order to accommodate my limitations in terms of time I calculated that I could scan-read approximately a third of the letters on microfilm. The most obvious approach was to read every third letter but it soon became apparent that many of the letters tended to refer to each other in immediate sequence or to some specific event in the recent past. For example, a bundle of letters would all be referring to a particular problem or breakthrough in the mission project, or to a local insurrection or famine. So as to understand the letters more thoroughly and to more fully immerse myself in the themes of the day, I therefore decided to take ‘slices of time’, to coin a phrase, and to interrogate these ‘slices’ in detail. I did this in favour of focusing on a single limited moment in time, for example a single decade, so as to get a better feel for any potential change in attitudes over time which might have occurred and also so as to

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<sup>152</sup> William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Assyrian Mission Papers* coded G3200-1 and G3200-3.

<sup>155</sup> The physical archive itself covers the period from 1908 to 1968 (and the bulk of its information covers the period 1911 to 1965) but for the purposes of my research the cut-off point was 1914.

gain a broader picture of the mission. Therefore, on micro-film I investigated the periods; May 1870 to January 1873, January 1880 to March 1884, all of 1890, June 1895 to April 1896, and August 1899 to November 1902.<sup>156</sup>

A note is necessary at this point as to the presentation of the quotations I have made from the American Presbyterian Archive. The grammar and spelling of the American missionaries is at times somewhat odd to a twenty-first century British English reader, particularly the excessive use of the ampersand, but I have left the quotations largely as I have found them in the interests of faithfulness to the original text. It is my desire to leave the text as unbroken by my own grammatical comment as is possible, and to avoid editing the quotations with the use of square brackets as this would risk distorting the meaning and intent of the source and also the 'feel' of the original author's voice.

To the data derived from these archives I have added quotations and commentary from significant publications from outside these collections, these publications are nonetheless the works of ex-missionaries who were active in the Kurdish mission-field and who were engaged with the missions of this study. These texts constitute primary sources which are particularly salient to the expression of the Orientalist thought of these two missions and the articulation of their missionary world-view regarding imperialism. During the analysis of this data and throughout the work of identifying narrative trends which unify the thought and practice of the missionaries within one or other of the missions, it became apparent that an individuality of thought was nonetheless always present. It has thus been my intention to reflect in my findings both the existence of collective modes of thought within each mission and the occasional defiance of these modes by individuals. This demonstrates an important point, that while trends and common narratives can be identified and are important they should not necessarily be assumed to be determinative and thus they do not constitute the only possible standpoint which can be held by an individual member of that group. Having outlined both the theoretical model and the methodological approach of my thesis, I will now present the most salient aspects of the context within which the two missions studied conducted their missionary work.

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<sup>156</sup> To this we can add the period 1908 to 1914 from the extant physical archive of data.

## 1.2 Historical and Geographical Context

Throughout the nineteenth century and up until the outbreak of the First World War a protracted struggle was fought between two Protestant missions over the fate of a supposedly 'Oriental' people. This was not a conflict of guns and swords but of words and ideas, the import of which, to both parties, was the spiritual transformation of an 'Oriental' realm. The protagonists in this dispute were two organisations, each articulating its own understanding of the nature of this Oriental space; on the one side were the Anglicans of the 'Assyrian' Mission, and on the other the American Presbyterians of the West Persia Mission.<sup>157</sup> My first task, however, in introducing this missionary battle is to define more accurately the boundaries of this Oriental space. It is true to say that in the parlance of nineteenth-century Europeans and Americans the idea of the Orient could sometimes allude to so broad a concept as to include all those lands which were conceptually *not* the 'West'.<sup>158</sup> In slightly less general terms 'Orient' could indicate all those lands embraced by the notion of *the* 'East'. The Orient of this particular missionary conflict, however, was constituted more specifically by those lands and peoples governed by the Islamic States of the Ottoman Empire and Persia, a conceptual space to which these missionaries systematically referred to as a 'Mohammedan' realm.<sup>159</sup>

A significant underlying goal of both missions was the *spiritual* overthrow of this 'Mohammedan' realm through the conversion of its peoples to Christianity. However, the burning question which formed the center-piece of disagreement between the two missions was how the local population of this realm could be most effectively converted, and to precisely what form of Christianity should they be converted. On the one hand, the Presbyterians asserted that the "light and truth"<sup>160</sup> of their Gospel

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<sup>157</sup> It is perhaps a moot point as to just how Protestant the High Church Anglicans of the Assyrian Mission can be said to have been, but nonetheless I think it is a reasonable designation in consideration of their rejection of Papal authority and infallibility, including the infallibility of ecumenical councils.

<sup>158</sup> The 'West' too would seem to have been an undefined and yet 'understood' object of knowledge which was believed to correspond to some geographical reality but whose qualities were mostly to do with moral and intellectual values (such as honesty, self-knowledge and vigour) associated with the concept of 'civilization'.

<sup>159</sup> Usually with various derogatory adjectives affixed such as the realm of Mohammedan despotism or tyranny. See: chapter 3, section— *Orientalism and Protestant Mission*.

<sup>160</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 61.

message should be directly administered to the “dark minds”<sup>161</sup> of every ‘Oriental’. While on the other, the Anglicans eschewed such direct proselytisation claiming that, in order to avoid the creation of some dreadful chimera,<sup>162</sup> one had to respect “the genius and sympathies of the Oriental mind”.<sup>163</sup> This latter idea simply meant that, in the view of the Anglican mission, an Oriental mind required an Oriental form of Christianity, and furthermore *only* an Oriental Christianity had any chance of achieving the conversion of the majority Muslim population.<sup>164</sup> Where these two diametrically opposed views most directly collided was in their assistance to and influence over the Christian communities of the Old East Syrian Church. These communities were known to the missionaries as Nestorians, Assyrians, or simply Syrians. They formed a loose coalition of communities affiliated by their religion and, to varying degrees, under the leadership of their Patriarch the Mar Shimun.<sup>165</sup> Their population was dispersed into both tribal and non-tribal groupings across a wide territory which straddled the border between the two Islamic states, an area which these missionaries knew as Kurdistan and which is discussed in detail below. An interesting aspect of this ecclesiastical and inter-missionary battle is that it contextualises and highlights differences in the perception of the Orient that existed between two groups which were both ostensibly Orientalist.<sup>166</sup> Before engaging in the analysis of this thesis, however, I will outline some important terms which contextualise the data within its historical and geographical frame.

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> For example, the Anglican missionary the Rev Wigram refers to this mixture of ‘East’ and ‘West’ as unintentionally evolving into “some new sort of Frankenstein’s Man.” William A. Wigram and Edgar T. A. Wigram. *The Cradle of Mankind: life in Eastern Kurdistan* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1914), 2.

<sup>163</sup> Rev. George Percy Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals: with the narrative of a mission to Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in 1842-44 and of a late visit to those countries in 1850: also, researches into the present condition of the Syrian Jacobites, Papal Syrians, and Chaldeans, and an enquiry into the religious tenets of the Yezedees*, vol. 1 (London: Darf, 1987), 10.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>165</sup> Mar being the honorific title bestowed upon the higher ranking members of the Old East Syrian Church and being, according the Anglican Mr Athelstan Riley, similar to the English word ‘lord’. Athelstan Riley, *The Assyrian Christians. Report of a Journey, undertaken by desire of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and His Grace the Archbishop of York, to the Christians in Koordistan and Oroomiah*, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.01, 15 note 1.

<sup>166</sup> See: chapter 1.1, section - *Orientalism and Essentialism*.

## 'Kurdistan'

The encounter between these two missionary groups occurred within a geographical region known to them as Kurdistan, but the definition of Kurdistan in academia has been and remains a notoriously difficult and highly politicized issue. In the present day there exists within the borders of the four nation-states of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey geographical regions where the majority of the population identify themselves as Kurdish. This geographical region is frequently, although not without contestation, considered to be Kurdistan.<sup>167</sup> What is of primary significance to my thesis, however, is the usage of the term by the Orientalist subjects of my study prior to the formation of these nation-states. To the missionaries of the Assyrian and West Persia missions the term 'Kurd' referred to a Muslim people, described usually but not always as tribal and semi-nomadic, and frequently used as a synonym for wildness and lawlessness.<sup>168</sup> It might be added that the missionaries frequently projected themselves into the role of advocate for the welfare of Christian communities in the region and that this regularly put them in a position of antagonism with the Kurds, whom they consequently perceived as raiders and oppressors. This sense of alignment with the Christian communities against the Kurds is usefully illustrated by the Rev. Edward Lewis Cutts, writing in preparation for an Anglican mission to the 'Nestorian' Christians after his expedition in 1878. He states that:

Until the year 1834 the Nestorian Christians inhabiting the mountains of Koordistan were almost unknown to us; they were surrounded on all sides by independent Koordish tribes, whose fierce temper and lawless habits made their country inaccessible to the European traveller.<sup>169</sup>

To the Anglican and Presbyterian missionary writers therefore the region where the Kurds predominated was known to them as Kurdistan. This also correlated with their

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<sup>167</sup> This contestation is usually political in nature and associated with the nation states who claim sovereignty over these areas in spite of the majority claim to Kurdishness. For an in depth analysis of the notion of Kurdistan see: Maria T. O'Shea, *Trapped between Map and Reality: geography and perceptions of Kurdistan* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>168</sup> See: Chapter 3, section - *Orientalism and Protestant Mission*.

<sup>169</sup> Edward Lewes Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1878), 1.

understanding of official Ottoman and Persian usage of the term to indicate the largely mountainous provinces of the border regions between the two States. This rather fluid definition leads to an indistinct delineation of the region in geographical terms, but for the purposes of this study it certainly included the regions within the Ottoman Empire known as Bohtan, Bahdinan, Hakkari (Hakkari) and as far north as Lake Van. On the Persian side of the border this area included the mountainous regions which surrounded the fertile plains of north-western Persia, and stretched out towards Lake Urmia (Urmia<sup>170</sup>) and both south, beyond Soldooz (Solduz, modern-day Naghadeh), and north into Salmas.<sup>171</sup>

### The Syrians<sup>172</sup>

The sole target of Anglican missionary effort was, as its name implies, the 'Assyrian' Church and its people whom they also knew as Syrians. The aim of the American Presbyterian mission, by contrast, was the conversion of *all* 'Orientals' to their particular form of Christianity. However, in the words of the American missionary Robert McEwan Labaree "no other nationality in this part of the world has furnished more loyal laborers [sic]<sup>173</sup> in Christ's vineyard than the Syrian."<sup>174</sup> Therefore, to both the Anglican and the American Presbyterian missions the Syrian community was of prime significance, and it is the collision of this proselytising American mission with the non-proselytising Anglican mission which provides the opportunity for a

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<sup>170</sup> Also spelling variants such as Urmi, Urmiah and Oroomiah occur in the texts of the missionaries.

<sup>171</sup> See map 1. *Map of the Assyrian or Chaldean Country*: which is a map drawn in 1886 to depict the travels of Mr. Athelstan Riley and which shows the names of the Kurdish and Syrian tribes as understood by the missionaries of the Anglican mission at the time. Map reproduced by permission of Lambeth Palace Library: Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-2, 380r.

<sup>172</sup> For a detailed disambiguation of the term Syrian, see: J. F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England: a history of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), see page 4, Terminology.

<sup>173</sup> Note that throughout this thesis I will be quoting from sources who prefer American variant spellings, to preserve the integrity of the quotations I shall in all cases use their spelling preferences and from this point onwards refrain from the use of the [sic] notation in the interests of the flow of the writing.

<sup>174</sup> Robert McEwan Labaree, *Report of Evangelistic Work – Urmia Station. 1910-1911*, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 3: Station Reports. Box 4. Folder 10

comparative study of their opposing world-views regarding the 'Orient'. The confrontation between these two missions was thus focused upon the establishment and maintenance of influence over the Old East Syrian Church, and it is the justifications of their respective missions found in the record of their correspondences and publications which presents some of the most useful insights into their respective world-views.

The term *Syrian* is used throughout this work as an adjective to describe the Syriac speaking Christians inhabiting the eastern reaches of the Ottoman Empire comprising the mountainous region to the north-east of the Mesopotamian basin and of the north-western boundaries of Persia around lake Urmia.<sup>175</sup> More specifically it is used to refer to those Christians who adhere to the form of worship and social organisation known as the Old East Syrian Church or Church of the East, sometimes referred to as Nestorian or Assyrian.<sup>176</sup> Although this dispersed community was essentially ecclesiastical in origin Heleen Murre-van den Berg informs us that there is good reason to suppose that by the nineteenth century they had for some time begun to think of themselves as an ethnic group distinct from their neighbours in race and culture.<sup>177</sup>

These communities were, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, limited to the region defined above as Kurdistan. The Anglican supporter of mission, Mr. Athelstan Riley M.A., locates the Syrian communities within "that part of Kurdistan which lies in Turkey and Persia between the towns of Van, Jezireh, and Mosul on the west, and Lake Urmi on the east."<sup>178</sup> Broadly speaking they dwelt in tribally organised communities in the mountains of Hakkiari (Hakkari) in Ottoman governed Kurdistan, and as non-tribal agriculturalists or town dwellers of the fertile Urmia

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<sup>175</sup> More accurately than Syriac one should say that they were speakers of a north-eastern neo-Aramaic dialect. See: H. L. Murre-Van Den Berg, "The Church of the East in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century: World Church or Ethnic Community?" *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, eds. J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-Van Den Berg, and T. M Van Lint (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2005), 303.

<sup>176</sup> For more on the debate surrounding the appropriate nomenclature for these communities, see: John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: encounters with Western Christian missions, archaeologists, and colonial power* (Leiden; Boston, M.A.: Brill, 2000), 2-3.

<sup>177</sup> Murre-van den Berg, *Redefining Christian Identity*, 301-320.

<sup>178</sup> Athelstan Riley, *Synopsis of Oriental Christians* (1908), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-16, 352.

Plains on the Persian side of the border.<sup>179</sup> This division of communities is often referred to by the missionaries as that between *ashiret* (tribal) and *rayat* (non-tribal). The Anglican missionary Rev. Wigram explains the terms as follows, “*ashiret* is a word that strictly means “tribe” or clan; but as descriptive of status it is contrasted with *rayat* or subject, and means that the bearers of the name [*ashiret*] pay tribute [...] and not taxes.”<sup>180</sup> This distinction usually correlated with those Syrians living on one side of the border or the other, with the *ashiret* on the Ottoman side and *rayat* on the Persian side; but this is not without exception, and some *ashiret* could be found living on the Persian side of the border and some *rayat* on the Ottoman side. The missionaries would also refer to this divided people as separated into mountaineers and plains dwellers, with the majority of the former on the Ottoman side of the border and the majority of the latter on the Persian side; there is thus a certain correlation between *ashiret* and mountaineers and between *rayat* and plains dwellers.<sup>181</sup>

Lastly, the term Syrian should in no way be confused with the nation-state of Syria. This modern political entity, the name of which derives from the Roman province, was the creation of the Great Powers after the First World War and has little historical continuity except as a Roman and later as an Ottoman administrative district. The Syrian Christian community on the other hand, whilst also deriving its name from the Roman designation, refers to their usage of Syriac as a language and their demographic distribution in the nineteenth century in no way corresponds to the boundaries of the modern nation-state.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> See map. Hakkiari is a mountainous area which included the tribal regions of Upper and Lower Tiari, Tchooma (Tkhoma), Diz, Tchal (Tal), Baz and Jeelu (Jilu). Also see: Murre-Van Den Berg, *Redefining Christian Identity*, 304. On the Persian side of the border the Syrian communities could be found from Salmas to Ushnook and in the bordering mountainous regions of Gewar, Tergewar and Margewar.

<sup>180</sup> Wigram and Wigram. *The Cradle of Mankind*, 167.

<sup>181</sup> But in all cases these divisions of the Syrian people are not without exception and cannot be thought of as hard and fast definitions.

<sup>182</sup> Which adopted Arabic and not Syriac as its official language and presents itself as an Arab State.



## The Two Missions of this Study

Anglican interest in the Kurdish region took its form in the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians. Following the British Government's 1835 expedition to the Euphrates valley, under the command of Colonel Chesney R.A.,<sup>183</sup> a second expedition was organised in 1838 which was funded by a coalition of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK).<sup>184</sup> The SPCK's interest was in expanding knowledge about the hitherto almost unknown Mountain Nestorians,<sup>185</sup> while the RGS pursued a more political interest in the discovery of alternative overland routes to India.<sup>186</sup> Thus it can be seen that from its inception the religious mission was directed and funded by private subscription rather than governmental or even commercial interests, but that a more political interest had made that opportunity available in the first place. It should also perhaps be borne in mind that the linkages between private and state activities are never so clear cut as to completely disengage one from the other, but it is nonetheless true to say that no such direct connection is clearly visible. This initial foray was then followed, in 1842, by the expedition of the Rev. George Percy Badger to assess the feasibility of a permanent mission.<sup>187</sup> Any further missionary activity, however, was curtailed in the aftermath of the 1843 Bedr Khan massacres and the controversy this caused in terms of perceived missionary culpability in these events.<sup>188</sup> It was thus not until April 1876 that a subsequent expedition of enquiry by the Rev. Edward Lewis Cutts was dispatched in response to a petition purporting to be from "the Nestorian people".<sup>189</sup> Formal mission was tentatively commenced in

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<sup>183</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv. Also see: Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia*, 1. Note, these dates do not tally exactly with the dates given by the Lambeth Palace Library, Database of Manuscripts and Archives, Church of England Record Centre - which suggest 1837 for the combined expedition between the RGS and the SPCK. See: the Lambeth Palace Library website 2012.

<sup>185</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 24-5.

<sup>186</sup> Heleen Murre-van den Burg, *From a Spoken to a Written Language: The Introduction and Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, 1999), 61.

<sup>187</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, xiv-xx.

<sup>188</sup> For an account of the Bedr Khan massacres see: Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: its origins and development* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 66-71.

<sup>189</sup> Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia*, 3. Cutts also states that "From that day [1843] to this [1878] occasional appeals have come from the Nestorians praying for English help. In 1868 a formal petition, chiefly from that portion of the Nestorian people which is located in the plain of Oroomiah, reached the late Archbishop of Canterbury". *Ibid.*

1881 with a single missionary worker and was later put on a more permanent footing in 1885 with the dispatch of additional missionaries.<sup>190</sup>

The overarching aim of the Anglican mission was to achieve some degree of ecumenical union between the Church of England and the Church of the East as associated branches of a broadly conceived Catholic and apostolic Church.<sup>191</sup> Perhaps the most significant obstacle in the pursuit of this objective was the perception of the heretical status of this Oriental Church which was known to the Anglicans, among other names, as the Nestorian Church. The particular point at issue was that Nestorius, the fifth century bishop of Constantinople, was considered by the Western Churches to have been anathematised, whereas within the Old East Syrian tradition Nestorius was held as one of the fathers of the Church.<sup>192</sup> Furthermore, two particular forms of address attributed to Nestorius, and condemned by Cyril the Archbishop of Alexandria at the Council of Ephesus 431,<sup>193</sup> concerning the nature of Christ and the Virgin Mary were in common usage in the Old East Syrian Church at the time of mission. Within the Western Churches Cyril is considered to have been victorious at the Council of Ephesus and is thus held as one of the doctors of the Early Christian Church while Nestorius was anathematised and branded as a heretic. The form of words championed by Nestorius which refer to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Christ was also condemned in place of the epithet Mother of God. Furthermore, in terms of the nature of Christ it has been assumed that Nestorius proclaimed Christ to have been possessed of two distinct persons with two separate natures (one human and one Divine) instead of one person with two natures. To put the case in rather simplistic terms, the position of the Western Churches is that Christ should be considered as one Person but with two Natures – Divine and human, whereas, according to Paul Clayton, the Nestorian theological

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<sup>190</sup> National Church Institutions Database of Manuscripts and Archives, Lambeth Palace Library, 08/02/2013. The first missionary sent out was Rudolph Wahl, in 1881, who was replaced by Maclean and Browne in 1885.

<sup>191</sup> This sentiment was in line with the High Church tone of the mission which embraced the Oxford Movement hope to reunite the various branches of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

<sup>192</sup> Although frequently referred to by the Anglicans of this study as the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius was perhaps more correctly only a bishop and of equal authority to his main adversary Cyril, bishop of Alexandria. See: Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian controversy: the making of a saint and of a heretic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>193</sup> There were in fact two Councils of Ephesus in 431, one held by each of the protagonists in the absence of the other. For an interesting account of this clash between Cyril and Nestorius, and one which reveals the similarity between Nestorius's Christological formulation and that of the later authoritative orthodox Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), see: Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian controversy*, 2-6.

speculations which are ascribed to the Patriarchal seat of Antioch led to the idea of Christ as two Persons. Clayton says this of Nestorius and Antioch:

Its fundamental philosophical assumptions about the natures of God and humanity compelled the Antiochenes to assert that there are two subjects in the Incarnation: the Word himself and a distinct human personality.<sup>194</sup>

It is not the object of this thesis to discuss the rights and wrongs of these two apparently opposed views as to the nature of Christ within the Christian tradition, but it is necessary to state that the Anglicans perceived the Nestorian heresy to be endemic to the Old East Syrian Church and that this heresy was a serious obstacle to ecumenical union.

The mission remained a small scale endeavour with around half a dozen unmarried male missionaries and five nuns from the Sisters of Bethany in Urmia at its most numerous until it was disbanded at the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>195</sup> The official archive web-site adds that “Missionary work was intended to regenerate and reform the Assyrian Christians, focusing on the education of both clergy and laity. A college for priests and deacons was established, as were five high schools and forty village schools.”<sup>196</sup> A further aspect of the Anglican mission was that the missionaries dispensed medicines and humanitarian aid, particularly in times of crisis, and so one should not overlook the charitable spirit which formed a large part of the mission’s ethos. This is perhaps more particularly true of the educational work which was the principle aim of the mission and which sought “to promote such progress, educational and other, as shall conduce to [the Syrians] real advancement & Christian Civilisation.”<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Paul B. Clayton, Jr., *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus: Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Abstract.

<sup>195</sup> In 1896, a relative high point of mission, Coakley states that “the staff numbered thirteen (six clergy, two laymen, five Sisters).” Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 151.

<sup>196</sup> National Church Institutions Database of Manuscripts and Archives, Lambeth Palace Library, 08/02/2013.

<sup>197</sup> Archbishop Tait, *Letter to Wahl* (3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1882), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 173.

As for American missionary interest in the Kurdish region, this can be traced back to the exploratory efforts of Eli Smith and Harrison Gray Otis Dwight in 1829.<sup>198</sup> These preliminary sorties were then consolidated in 1834 through the creation, by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), of a mission to the 'Nestorian' Christians of Urumia in northwest Persia.<sup>199</sup> A formal mission was established that year by the Reverend Justin Perkins who was joined, a year later, by Dr. and Mrs. Asahel Grant.<sup>200</sup> The mission remained relatively small until it became, in 1871, a solely Presbyterian endeavour after which it underwent a vigorous expansion to include the whole of Persia within its remit.<sup>201</sup> The focus of this thesis falls upon the West Persia Mission<sup>202</sup> and its main mission stations of Urumia and Tabriz which, lying on the eastern edges of the Kurdish region, had the Syrian and Armenian Christians as its main focus but also attempted the proselytisation of Muslims from the Persian and Kurdish populations.<sup>203</sup> The size, in terms of missionaries, of these two combined mission stations was usually somewhat larger than that of the Anglican mission, but never much more than around a dozen individual missionaries. Michael Zirinsky puts the estimate at around 21 missionaries in Urumia and 12 in Tabriz at the outbreak of the First World War, at which point it would have been at its largest in the pre-war period.<sup>204</sup>

The object of the Presbyterian mission was essentially evangelical, to bring to all who would listen to their message a personal knowledge of the Gospels in the belief that such a knowledge would bring forth the action of the Holy Spirit upon the

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<sup>198</sup> Eli Smith, *Researches of the Rev. E. Smith and Rev. H. G. O. Dwight in Armenia: including a journey through Asia Minor, and into Georgia and Persia, with a visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oormiah and Salmas* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1833).

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* Also see: Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, 68.

<sup>200</sup> Presbyterian Historical Society, *Finding Aid to Record Group 91*, as above.

<sup>201</sup> When its support was taken over by the governing body PCUSA. See: Presbyterian Historical Society, Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. *Secretaries' Files: Iran Mission, 1881-1968 (bulk 1911-1965)*. *Finding Aid to Record Group 91. Administrative History*: [http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/fa.cfm?record\\_id=91](http://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/findingaids/fa.cfm?record_id=91), 13/07/2012.

<sup>202</sup> The official administrative division between an East and a West Persia Mission occurred in 1883 – see: Michael Zirinsky, *American Presbyterian Missionaries at Urmia During the Great War*, Iran Chamber Society, Saturday June 1<sup>st</sup> 2013.

[http://www.iranchamber.com/religions/articles/american\\_presbyterian\\_missionaries\\_zirinsky.pdf](http://www.iranchamber.com/religions/articles/american_presbyterian_missionaries_zirinsky.pdf)

<sup>203</sup> In addition to these main groups there are also some interesting accounts of encounters with minority religious communities, such as the "Ali Allahees" or "Dawoodees", see John H. Shedd, *letter May 25, 1870*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter. 1. Or S. G. Wilson, *letter March 29, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 144. And S. G. Wilson, *letter April 18, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 151. Also see the experiences of Miss Jewett amongst the Ahl-i Haqq of Manduab. Mary Jewett, *letter April 30, 1896*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.126. Index, Vol. 12, Letter. 173.

<sup>204</sup> Zirinsky, *American Presbyterian Missionaries at Urmia During the Great War*, Iran Chamber Society. Page 6.

individual.<sup>205</sup> Prior to 1871, and before the Presbyterians took over control of the mission, it was hoped that the American missionaries could work within the Old East Syrian Church, but the activities of the Americans and their converts soon met with hostility from the Old Church hierarchy and a new policy of proselytisation out of the Old Church was deemed expedient.<sup>206</sup> The hostility generated by the missionaries' influence over Nestorian Christians was perhaps unsurprising given, as Amanda Porterfield put it, the American missionaries' "powerful cultural tradition of resistance to social hierarchy and patriarchy".<sup>207</sup> These ideas, she explains, disrupted traditional cultural assumptions about authority and aggravated the relationship between indigenous Christians and Muslims.<sup>208</sup> On one level the representation of Muslim repression "struck many Muslims as offensive and combative, and [further] contributed to their persecution of the Nestorian community".<sup>209</sup> But perhaps the most contentious issue was that of gender differentiation and the role of women which was promoted by the missionaries and in particular by the Female Seminary set up in Urumia by Fidelia Fiske.<sup>210</sup> Porterfield explains that:

the American ideal of Republican Motherhood nurtured fundamental changes in Nestorian concepts of womanhood, and these changes figured centrally in the increasingly strained relationship between Nestorian and Muslim culture as well as in the polarization of Nestorian culture.<sup>211</sup>

These ideological standpoints elicited hostility from the traditional institutions of authority within the Nestorian Church and ultimately led the Presbyterian missionaries to abandon their original policy of working to 'restore' the Church from within. It should be added that the expanded scope of the West Persia mission, which included proselytisation from other communities such as the Armenians and Muslims, required a separate Protestant Church to accommodate those coming from

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<sup>205</sup> See: Chapter 3, section - *Proselytisation and Circumstantial Difference*.

<sup>206</sup> See: Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, 94.

<sup>207</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

outside the Old Syrian Church.<sup>212</sup> Consequently over time the method, of proselytising out of the Old Church to a new Evangelical Syrian Church, became the missionaries' policy; and it is this approach which the Presbyterians inherited in 1871 that is the focus of my analysis.<sup>213</sup> Adding to these tensions was the controversial Presbyterian aspiration to proselytise Muslims, which was prohibited by both the Persian and Ottoman Governments with the apostasy of Muslims being potentially punishable by death. Nonetheless, the mission would always be involved, with varying degrees of openness, in work which included the proselytisation of both Christians and Muslims.<sup>214</sup>

The aims and aspirations of the Presbyterian mission can thus be seen from an initial evaluation to claim no political, commercial, or cultural objectives but instead reveal a desire to spread a particular understanding of religious expression. The archive of the Presbyterian Historical Society states that the work in Persia "was three-fold in nature: evangelical, medical and educational."<sup>215</sup> The official description continues as follows:

Numerous local churches were organized and placed in the hands of native ministers within the central Evangelical Church of Iran. Medical work began as early as 1835 and was extended in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Formal hospitals were built in Kermanshah in

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<sup>212</sup> See: Murre-van den Burg, *From a Spoken to a Written Language*, 68.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 67. Murre-van den Burg suggests that it is 1862 with the creation of a *Sunhados*, or council, drawn from members of the indigenous Syrian community which marks the departure from the old policy of working to 'restore' the Old Church from within.

<sup>214</sup> The British Consul in Tabriz sternly warned that the actions of the mission not only jeopardize the future of the Mission but also threaten to destabilize the region. See: Abbott (esq.), *letter January 7, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 116. Furthermore, the missionaries of the West Persia Mission reported some limited successes in this latter endeavour despite the risk to for their converts. See for example: Benjamin D. D. Labaree, Jr., *letter September 12, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter. 48. Benjamin D. D. Labaree, Jr., *letter February 4, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 30. Joseph Lewis Potter, *letter April 7, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 48. Abbott esq. British Consul Tabriz, *letter January 7, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 116. Samuel Graham Wilson, *letter January 31, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 128. Mary K. Van Duzee, *letter February 3, 1883*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.119. Index, Vol. 3, Letter. 6. John Newton Wright, *letter March 28, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter. 101. Lillie B. Beaber, *letter August 20, 1901*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.273. Index, Vol. 196, Letter. 3.

<sup>215</sup> Secretaries' Files: Iran Mission, 1881-1968 (bulk 1911-1965). Finding Aid to Record Group 91. Administrative History.

1882, in Teheran in 1890, and in Tabriz in 1913, followed by similar openings in Meshed, Hamadan, and Resht.<sup>216</sup>

For some reason this overview ignores a hospital which was already well established in Urmia by 1913, but it does nonetheless emphasise the enormous humanitarian work which was being performed by the Presbyterian missionaries for no apparent ulterior motive than service to mankind and the visible example of virtue that this set.<sup>217</sup> Equally the educational work performed by the missionaries provided the sole means of formal education to many Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the region, and formed the basis for future schools. The Presbyterian Historical Society states that schools were initially established for the children of missionaries but that ultimately “these grew into multi-national institutions such as the Alborz Foundation (Armaghan Institute), Iran Bethel (Damavand) College, the Community School of Teheran, the Mehr Jordan Schools.”<sup>218</sup> In Urmia the missionaries established a seminary school for the training of ‘native’ pastors, a higher school for both Muslim and Christian students, and sponsored numerous village schools administered by ‘native’ teachers. This brief evaluation, however, does not deal with the deeper cultural dimensions of the missions of this study and their less obvious motivations; and these will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

### The Importance of Missionary Narratives

Although the letters and reports of missionaries are interesting in and of themselves they do, however, have a broader significance. Firstly, a great deal of writing upon the nineteenth-century history of the Kurds and of Kurdistan is based upon the eye-witness accounts of missionaries. Examples of this are Wadie Jwaideh’s *The*

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<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> Reference to the Urumia Hospital can be found in the letters of the missionaries. Example: H. P. Packard, M.D, *Medical Report – Urumia*. H. P. Packard, M.D. 1913, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 3: Station Reports. Box 4. Folder 10.

<sup>218</sup> Secretaries' Files: Iran Mission, 1881-1968 (bulk 1911-1965). Finding Aid to Record Group 91. Administrative History.

*Kurdish National Movement: its origins and development* and David McDowell's *A Modern History of the Kurds*.<sup>219</sup> The reason for their frequent use by historians is that the English language archives of the Protestant missionaries have survived exceptionally well and are easily accessible. Secondly, publications such as the *Missionary Herald* were instrumental in delivering to a vast 'home' audience descriptions of the 'Orient' which often constituted the only representations of the region available to the populations of Britain and America during the nineteenth century. In this way they had a significant influence upon the development of a public discursive image of the region and it is therefore important to identify the specific nature of these Protestant missionary narratives in relation to the critique of Orientalism.

Throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century the Kurdish region, as defined above, presented a source of fascination to an overtly Christian and highly literate British and American public. Couched in a biblical framework, the region seemed to provide evidence for many Orientalist fantasies, such as the lost greatness of biblical civilizations which were represented as newly accessible through the application of new scientific methods. The sciences of philology and archaeology, for example, were seen to be decoding the remnants of an ancient past and the fate of the lost tribes of Israel was a popular theme of 'scientific' speculation.<sup>220</sup> Within the context of a nineteenth-century popular European conception of the 'Orient' these enquiries tended to look past the contemporary culture of the 'East' which was conceived to be largely irrelevant to the grandeur of past civilizations.

This vision of the 'Orient' is not without its exceptions however. Murre-van den Berg illustrates how William McClure Thompson, an American missionary and author of a nineteenth-century pilgrims' guide, used his observations of contemporary practices

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<sup>219</sup> See: Chapter 2, section - *Missionaries as Ambiguous Actors*.

<sup>220</sup> See for example: William Francis Ainsworth, *Researches in Assyria, Babylonia, and Chaldaea: Forming Part of the Labors of the Euphrates Expedition* (London: Parker, 1838); Asahel Grant, *The Nestorians or the Lost Tribes: containing evidence of their identity, their manners, customs, and ceremonies; with sketches of travel in ancient Assyria, Armenia, Media, and Mesopotamia; and illustrations of scripture prophecy* (London: John Murry, 1843); Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and its remains; with an account of a visit to the Chaldaean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or devil-worshippers, and an enquiry into the manners and arts of the ancient Assyrians* (London, 1854).



in Palestine to inform his interpretation of the Bible as a historical document.<sup>221</sup> Nonetheless such a treatment of the 'Orient' reduces the region and its peoples to something of a living fossil whose only significance lies in its value in illuminating the past within a Christocentric world view. Robert Irwin, in his repost to the Orientalist critique, gives an account of the predilection within academic Orientalism for studying early Islam and classical Arabic as a vehicle for approaching subjects of Biblical interest rather than for a particular interest in the Orient itself.<sup>222</sup>

A dominant public perception was that what remained in the 'East' was a degeneration from past glories due to a deleterious racial dilution which had left the 'Orient' in a state of decline and with an ethical and moral spirit which denied the very possibility of redemption.<sup>223</sup> Yet, to the majority of Europeans and Americans who actually visited, lived, and died in the Kurdish region during this period, the primary motivation for being there was just such an aspiration to revive the contemporary 'Orient' through missionary endeavour. This raises the question therefore as to whether missionary narratives were influenced by an alternative perception in which the 'Orient' was viewed as a redeemable object and not simply a relic of the past. If this were the case then it would mean that their knowledge production diverged from the expectations of the Orientalist critique, which – as was discussed in the first section of this chapter – considers ontological difference to be a definitional component of Orientalist style, and instead portrays humanity as separated by the influences of religious confession and belief.

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<sup>221</sup> Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "William McClure Thomson's *The Land and the Book: Pilgrimage and Mission in Palestine*," *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, edited by Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 43-63. To my mind this variance demonstrates the possible diversity of representations of the 'Orient' within a more fluid Orientalist discourse. That is to say that the discourse should not be considered to be a single monolithic presence but rather a dynamic pressure influencing rather than determining thought and action.

<sup>222</sup> See: Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, 82-108. Irwin's point is that this fascination with the Orient represents an intense focus upon Biblical studies within European academia, rather than an interest in the Orient itself or the pursuit of interests of imperial expansion.

<sup>223</sup> I am referring particularly to the influential assertions made by Arthur de Gobineau (1816-82) in his seminal work of racial theory *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853-55). Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lott state that the influence of works which followed on from Gobineau and attempted to integrate the biological work of Darwin into theories of social hierarchy gained great acceptance throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. They emphasise this point by saying that, by "the end of the nineteenth century, the dominant view was that racial purity was necessary for a race or a nation to maintain its strength and vitality." Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott, eds., *The Idea of Race*, Readings in Philosophy series (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2000), xi.

For American missionaries of the period a significant force, perhaps the primary motivating force, behind the project to proselytise the inhabitants of the Kurdish and greater Middle East region was the millennialist aspiration of radical Protestant mission. Millennialist aspirations looked forward to the second coming of Christ and the establishment of a thousand year reign of peace on earth. Hans-Lukas Kieser argues that “American mission to the Ottoman Near East was, all in all, postmillennialist”<sup>224</sup> in its motivation, and explains the term as follows:

Specific, but not exclusive, to American millennialism is the distinction between premillennialism and postmillennialism. Literally, these terms refer to the distinction between Jesus’ coming before or after the millennium. Postmillennialism was millennialism plus modern Enlightenment; it entrusted missionary America with the task of preparing the Kingdom, in inter- and transnational cooperation, using to this end all pacific means: science, technological progress, and historical opportunities.<sup>225</sup>

This postmillennialist ideology required the preparation of the world for the coming of Christ and consequently necessitated a vision of ‘Orientals’ as redeemable and of the geographical Orient as ‘perfectible’.

In Europe and North America during this period a dominant narrative, and one that persists to this day in various and modified forms, conceptualised the world in terms of a Christian and civilized ‘West’ confronting a less civilized and non-Christian ‘East’.<sup>226</sup> According to the Orientalist critique this sense of ‘otherness’ was reinforced by a deepening perception of ontological superiority imbued by the growing dominance of Europe over the ‘Orient’ and this sense of superiority consequently fed into ideas of empire and domination.<sup>227</sup> An important feature, however, of this perceived confrontation between ‘East’ and ‘West’ with regard to the Kurdish region

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<sup>224</sup> Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Nearest East: American Millennialism and Mission to the Middle East* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> For an example of this contemporary phenomenon see: Samuel P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order* (London: Touchstone Books, 1998). Also see: Bernard Lewis, *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25.

<sup>227</sup> By ontological I mean the notion of a permanent or racial state of being passed on at birth which was imagined to cause Orientals to be in some sense irrevocably different to ‘Westerners’. See my theoretical model: chapter 1, section - *Orientalism and essentialism*.

was that missionary endeavour dominated the encounter. As a result, the knowledge production concerning this remote and unknown land came to an English reading public through the particular observations and commentaries of missionaries who portrayed the region from the standpoint of a 'redeemable Orient'. Therefore, a consideration of the effect of these more egalitarian views upon their knowledge production is of prime importance in the appreciation of the data they provide to the historian as well as the impact it may have had upon the broader social discourse of their home countries.

### Mission and Empire

Prior to the nineteenth century the efforts of the Western Christian Churches to combat the perceived heresies of Oriental Christianity had been largely the domain of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>228</sup> However, with the rise to political, military, and economic ascendancy of predominantly Protestant nation-states throughout the nineteenth century there came a new religious interest in the Orient. American and British missions abounded from West Africa to Palestine and further eastwards until East became West in Hawaii, spreading forms of Christianity deeply enmeshed with the cultural processes and values which were thought to have brought about this pre-eminence.<sup>229</sup> This correlation between the expansion of empires and the expansion of missions gives rise to the apparent connection between the two. The immediate impression generated by such an overview of Protestant missionary expansion is that of a small army of missionaries who sought to prepare the way for the coming economic and political domination which would be brought about by the secular authorities of their home countries.

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<sup>228</sup> By Western Christian Churches I refer to the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and later the Anglican Churches. The appellation can be given a certain amount of credence in the light of ecumenical theories, such as the Branch theory of William Palmer, which embrace the concept of One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church which is made up of a number of individual branches of divergent liturgical forms.

<sup>229</sup> Values, that is, of individual accountability which are central to ideas of republicanism and rationalism and which are frequently associated with the Western European Enlightenment.

An example of this kind of assumption can be seen in the work of Salahi Sonyel whose book, *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia* - which is a Turkish apologia written essentially to counter the Armenian genocide narrative, speaks rather unambiguously of 'Western' missionaries as the agents of secular power.<sup>230</sup> Referring specifically to the effects of Protestant American missionaries working in the Armenian communities, he unequivocally states that the "Armenian *millet* was thus divided by these agents of the major Powers."<sup>231</sup> Kamal Madhar Ahmad, from a different standpoint, accuses the British government of sending Anglican missionaries to the Assyrians of Hakkari to "take advantage of the national and religious minorities in Kurdistan and firmly establish their influence among them."<sup>232</sup> Furthermore, this reductive image of the relationship between missionaries and empires is noted by Eleanor Tejirian and Reeva Spector Simon who point out that missionary activity "has frequently been regarded as part of Western imperialism and colonialism as it evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries".<sup>233</sup> Is it, however, justifiable to conflate the secular urge of states to exploit the Orient with the religious drive of individuals who took advantage of new opportunities opened up by the hegemony of their home countries?

It is perhaps less unreasonable to assume that where the relationship between Church and state was direct and less ambiguous, such as in the case of Tsarist Russia and its Orthodox Church, that such a correlation between politico-economic objectives and religious conversion may have existed. Or as in the case of the sponsorship of Roman Catholic missions to Africa and the Middle East by the French Government.<sup>234</sup> However, in the case of Protestant missions where individuals were moved by personal conscience to endure privation for no material gain, and where funding was derived from private donation, the premise that they were agents of political power, seems far less tenable. The accusation seems in fact to be a rather reductive assumption that, as Europeans and Americans, these missionaries must have been agents of their home countries.

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<sup>230</sup> Salahi Sonyel, *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia: Turks and Armenians in the Maelstrom of Major Powers* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 2000), ix.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>232</sup> Kamal Madhar Ahmad, *Kurdistan during the First World War* (London: Saqi Books, 1994), 24-5.

<sup>233</sup> Tejirian & Simon, *Altruism and Imperialism*, vi.

<sup>234</sup> Although, as Tony Chafer explains, this was to change with the "Third Republic's metropolitan agenda of separation of Church and state." Chafer, *Africa*, 193.

A more figurative accusation might speculate that the activities of these missionaries were another expression of the attitudes which perceived the Orient as ontologically inferior to the Occident. That is to say that the ‘truth’ they felt they were spreading was an expression of the cultural superiority they believed marked out the ‘West’ as ontologically superior to the ‘East’. In reference to this idea Tejjirian and Simon state that “writers like Edward Said have criticized [missionaries] as quintessential “Orientalists,” [who displayed] an ethnocentrism and belief in the superiority of the West that appears throughout their writings.”<sup>235</sup> The findings of Tejjirian and Simon’s work, however, suggest that the relationship between missionaries and the Orient they encountered was more complex and ambiguous than this. I would add that, if they were ‘quintessential Orientalists’ then one might perhaps perceive missionary endeavours in the light of a cultural conquest conducted in religious terms for the domination of the ‘Oriental soul’.<sup>236</sup> But this assumption without strong supporting evidence, is rather too speculative to constitute a firm theory of the relationship between missionary activity and secular power.<sup>237</sup> I would argue that any academic analysis of missionary activity should guard against such generalising assumptions of motivation and intent, and instead concern itself with more concrete evidence such as the documented activities and writings of individual missionaries.

In the introduction to *Altruism and Imperialism*, which adopts just such a micro-historical approach, the editors suggest that the evidence of their work “reveals that [missionary endeavour] was by no means monolithic, nor was it necessarily directly related to or supportive of Western imperial ambitions.”<sup>238</sup> This focus on micro-histories enables enquiry to break through the barriers of assumption and to appreciate the human and diverse aspect of interaction in these cultural contact zones. After all, to assume that Protestant missionaries were merely agents of an Orientalist urge which mirrored the secular objectives of politicians, diplomats, and soldiers would seem to invoke a similar kind of generalising binary model of ‘East’ versus ‘West’ as was deployed by nineteenth-century Orientalists. The problem with the binary of the dominant and exploitative Orientalist versus the exploited and dominated Oriental is that it leads to a reductive and generalising picture of both and

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<sup>235</sup> Tejjirian & Simon, *Altruism and Imperialism*, vii.

<sup>236</sup> But such an interpretation relies upon the assumption that such a collective entity does actually exist.

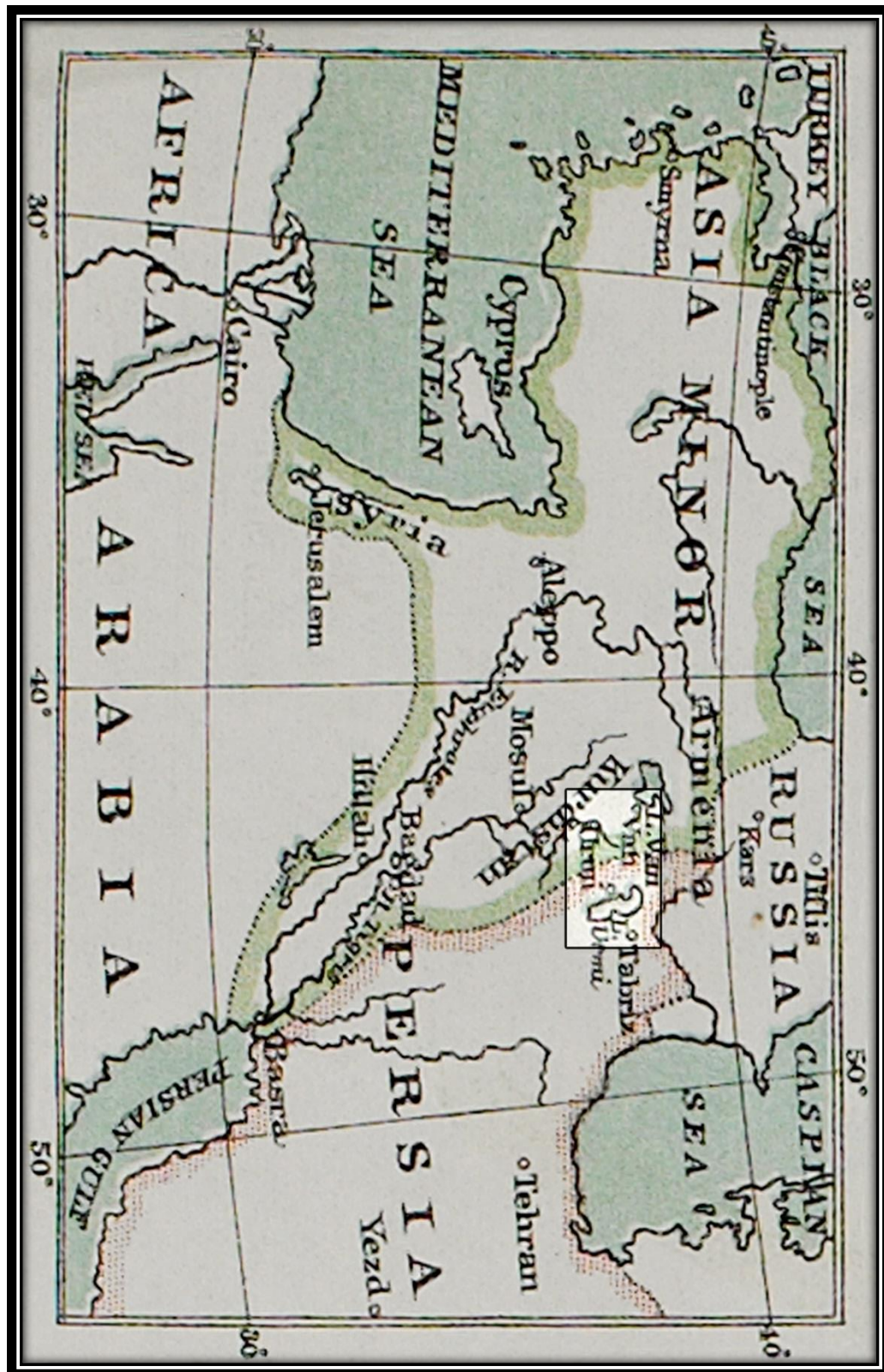
<sup>237</sup> Even though this seems to be exactly what Edward Said is suggesting. See Said, *Orientalism*, 100.

<sup>238</sup> Tejjirian & Simon, *Altruism and Imperialism*, vi.

would in fact constitute a perpetuation of those alleged Orientalist stereotypes. Furthermore, it tends to reify the analytical category of the imperialistic European and to deny the possibility of other currents of thought which may have competed with the culturally dominant essentialist Orientalism of nineteenth-century Britain and America.

My thesis therefore seeks to question the uniformity of this generalising portrayal of the Occident and to nuance the application of the Orientalist critique by highlighting the very specific identity positions adopted by different Protestant missionaries. This promises to be all the more interesting because the missionaries of this study are located in a cultural contact zone at the edges of imperial influence where the compelling pressures of a popular essentialist Orientalism were perhaps weak and the more egalitarian spiritual imperative of their Christian mission was strong.

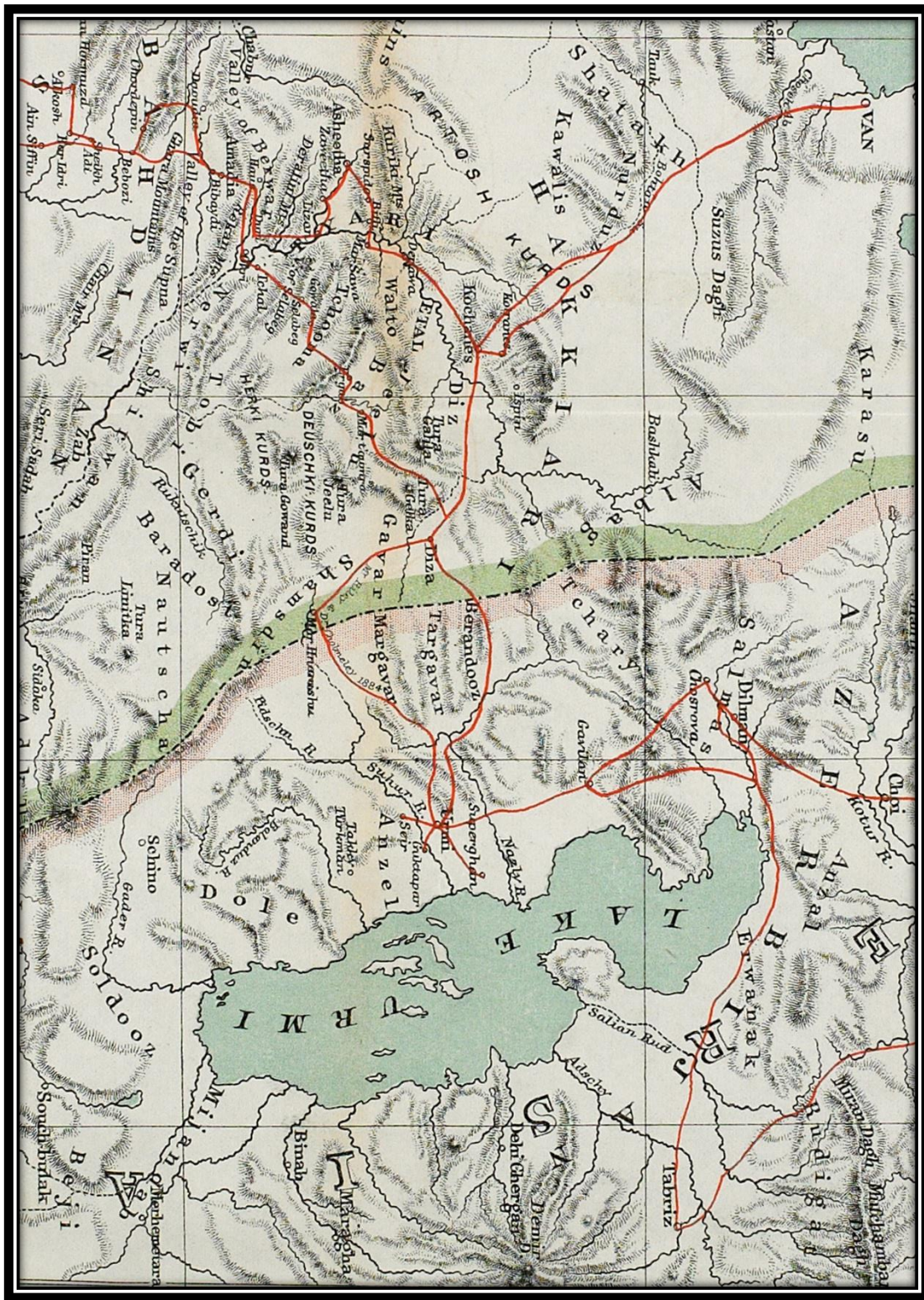
1886 map showing location of the Kurdish mission field as highlighted



Map reproduced here by permission of Lambeth Palace Library. Assyrian Mission AM-2 380r.



1886 map showing detail of Kurdish mission field including names of tribes and places as they were known to the Anglican missionaries



Map reproduced here by permission of Lambeth Palace Library. Assyrian Mission AM-2 380r.



## Chapter Two – Conflicting Interpretations of Missionary Endeavour

This chapter looks at historical works which evaluate the nature and role of Protestant mission with regard to European imperial expansion during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The analysis of this chapter looks primarily at those works which take account of the history of the Kurdish region, as this is the geographical focus of my thesis, but it also draws selectively from important works which focus upon the activities of Protestant missions within the Middle East more broadly conceived. My analysis divides these works into three categories in relation to the judgement of their authors as to the complicity of missionaries with imperial power, and as such serves as both a review of the academic literature on the subject and as a theoretical background to an unresolved academic issue. Therefore, each of the three sections of this chapter represents a particular standpoint held by academics in relation to the perceived complicity of missionaries with projects of European and American imperial expansion and domination.

It is noticeable that within this body of work many historians give a cursory account of missionary activity, if they make any mention of it at all, which belies the sizable contribution of missionary narratives to the data upon which many histories of the region are either directly or indirectly based.<sup>2</sup> With this cursory treatment comes a certain degree of assumption and generalisation as to the nature and effect of missionary activity which in turn leads to a stereotypical image of the relationship between missionaries and political power. Beyond the brevity and superficiality of many accounts of missionary activity, a striking feature of those works which do mention missionaries is the lack of consensus in terms of the relationship which they ascribe between those missionaries and political power. There are those who adamantly affirm the political nature of Protestant missionaries as agents of the Great Powers, those who reject this assertion and portray missionaries as non-political altruists, and others still, who maintain a more nuanced stand-point implying

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<sup>1</sup> To a lesser extent this includes America, whose own empire would come to include Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines, but whose economic and diplomatic influence can be considered as in some ways a form of imperialism.

<sup>2</sup> Many histories of the Kurdish region, when dealing with nineteenth century history, rely heavily upon missionary texts as eye-witness accounts and descriptions; good examples of this are the works of Wadie Jwaideh, John Joseph, and David McDowell – for whose works see below.

that missionaries are ambiguous agents of imperialism in some unconscious or unintentional manner. I will start this presentation of the debate over what is essentially the charge of missionary complicity with imperialism by citing some examples of authors who depict missionaries as the agents of 'Western' power.

### 2.1 Agents of the Great Powers

Perhaps the most clear-cut example of the manner in which Protestant missionaries can be depicted as scarcely more than functionaries of state is that of Salahi Sonyel, whose work *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia* depicts American Protestant missionaries as the agents of Great Power 'interests'.<sup>3</sup> This work, which emphasises the role of external forces in creating division and rivalry within the Ottoman empire, presents the politically useful notion that the activities of 'Western' actors in the region were primarily state-led. Sonyel explains that it was "mainly for economic reasons that the major expansionist Powers, from the early part of the nineteenth century onwards, began to send to the Ottoman territories travellers, missionaries, and various other agents".<sup>4</sup> The representation of agency here is of interest; the major powers are described as 'sending' missionaries, thus implying that the missionaries were functionaries of the state, whose own volition was of secondary importance to their role in furthering the economic and political interests of their home nation. The rationale of this representation of a state-led infiltration portrays missionary activity as a religious means to a political end.<sup>5</sup> The overarching significance of these activities in Sonyel's narrative is the direct relationship between political power and religious mission. In Sonyel's view, the Great Powers "employed various methods in bringing these communities under their influence: religious antagonisms, economic boons, the protégé system of affording protection to them,

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<sup>3</sup> Salahi Sonyel, *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia: Turks and Armenians in the Maelstrom of Major Powers* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

human rights issues, and finally promises of autonomy, even independence.”<sup>6</sup> This presentation implies that all of these diverse activities were initiated by and for political interests in a somewhat cynical manner, and that this political interference was the primary cause of social breakdown and fragmentation within Ottoman society in the Eastern provinces.<sup>7</sup> The absence of real evidence of this relationship seems to suggest that Sonyel’s narrative requires and thus is forced to produce an image of missionaries as unambiguous agents of the dominant imperial powers of the day, in this way the missionaries are presented as the religious arm of an expanding ‘Western’ imperial machine.

From a totally different perspective Kamal Madhar Ahmad, in his work *Kurdistan during the First World War*, also portrays missionaries as primarily political in nature. Ahmad connects British governmental interest in the minorities of Kurdistan to the religious mission sent by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Assyrians of Hakkiari.<sup>8</sup> This connection seems to rely upon the assumption that the mission to the ‘Assyrians’ was run and financed by the British government. Ahmad even goes so far as to claim that the village school set up in Qoganis (Qudshanis) “was run directly by the British consul in Van”.<sup>9</sup> It has to be pointed out that this is erroneous, the financial and operational chain of command passed from Qudshanis via the mission station in Urmia to the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, finances were derived from private donation and fundraising.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Ahmad claims that the American Presbyterians “were financed from the beginning by the US treasury”.<sup>12</sup> Once again it needs to be pointed out that the funding bodies for the American missionaries in the region were non-state charitable institutions which generated

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>8</sup> Kamal Madhar Ahmad, *Kurdistan during the First World War* translated by Ali Maher Ibrahim (London: Saqi Books, 1994), 24-5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. Note: the political post in Van was in fact that of Vice-Consul, not Consul.

<sup>10</sup> Qudshanis was a mission station which during the nineteenth century was composed of a single missionary, the Rev. W. H. Browne who would seem to have exerted a somewhat feeble influence over the Mar Shimun. See: Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library and J. F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England: a history of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Assyrian Mission* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Primarily through the charitable societies of the SPG and the SPCK. Many of the documents found in the Archive are in fact pamphlets appealing for charitable donations from individual members of the public for the support mission.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmad, *Kurdistan during the First World War*, 37.

finances through fundraising and private donation.<sup>13</sup> The causal link between missionary presence, their assumed political nature, and the resultant massacres is not so much argued in Ahmad's narrative as assumed. He states simply that:

the presence of such missionaries in Kurdish and other regions led to the heightening of tensions between their Muslim and Christian populations. That led to conflicts and to mutual massacres in several places during the years of the First World War.<sup>14</sup>

The insinuation here is that the 'Western' powers used missionaries as their tool to destabilise the region, and that such action led to the wholesale inter-communal massacres of the First World War. As with Sonyel, Ahmed seems to treat missionaries as if they were identical to the political agents of their home nations. It might be argued that a connection was made by the local populations of the region between the missionaries, as symbolic representatives of a foreign culture, and imperial power broadly perceived, but this does not mean that the missionaries actually were the agents of the imperial powers. The point at stake here is the distinction between reception and intention, and it matters greatly to the interpretation of the past not to conflate the two. There is a significant difference between a mission which cynically uses a religious pretext to further the political interests of an imperial power and one which pursues a religious interest in an imperial context. Apart from the inherent injustice of the accusation there is also the danger that such an interpretation might give false evidence of a homogeneity of purpose amongst 'Occidentals' which may not in fact exist. Ahmad's portrayal of missionaries seems to emanate from a binary perception of 'Western' imperial power, as a singular and homogenous entity, versus an undifferentiated 'Eastern' resistance and as such seems to constitute an uncritical usage of the Orientalist critique.

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<sup>13</sup> In the American case the funding body was the ABCFM from the 1834 to 1870, and the PCUSA Board for Foreign Missions from 1871 onwards. Ahmad cites N. Morten, *Middle East* (New York, 1943), for this piece of information. I can only assume that he means Henry Volla Morton, the travel writer and journalist, whose book *Middle East* was published in 1941 and republished in 1943. I cannot see, however, that this is a particularly reliable academic source of secondary information and I prefer to rely upon the primary source of the Presbyterian Historical Society's archive, which in record group 91 talks of the funds coming from the various Presbyteries throughout the United States in the form of personal donations.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmad, *Kurdistan during the First World War*, 39.

A further work which focuses upon the history of the Kurdish people is that of James Ciment's *The Kurds: State and Minority in Turkey, Iraq and Iran*. Ciment makes very little mention of Protestant missionaries which is surprising when one considers the impact he attributes to their activities. In fact he only directly mentions them once, saying that:

The growing presence of the Russian Empire in the region in the nineteenth century, as well as the appearance of British and American missionaries, introduced Western nationalist ideas directly into the Kurdish countryside. By supporting and promoting such ideas among the Armenians and other Christians, the Russians, British and Americans inadvertently inspired a competing nationalism among the Kurds, who felt threatened by the assertiveness of their traditional rivals.<sup>15</sup>

The activities of British and American missionaries in this statement are not explained nor is the context in which, or method by which, nationalist ideas were introduced. The result is the creation of a generalising narrative which bundles British and American missionaries into a single entity, and equally conflates Russian, British and American political interests with the non-political activities of Protestant missionaries to produce the impression of a homogenous 'Western' influence. It seems, therefore, that the representation of missionaries in this narrative is produced by the logic of a thesis which posits a uniformity to 'Western' influence as a collective force rather than making such assertions from the basis of specific evidence of missionary collusion. In this sense Ciment's portrayal reveals an inherent weakness in the genre of the grand narrative and the concomitant necessity for these to be nuanced by micro-historical analyses.

The above examples give a clear impression of the narrative use to which the image of Protestant missionary activity has been put to work to explain social disintegration in the Kurdish region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The problem with this mode of interpretation is that it does not appear to draw from missionary sources for its characterisation of them but instead relies upon an *a priori* image of missionaries as Orientalists and thus imperialists. It is also worth

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<sup>15</sup> James Ciment, *The Kurds: State and Minority in Turkey, Iraq and Iran* (New York: Facts on File, 1996), 138.

underlining that this representation not only reduces the agency of missionary individuals but also that of local communities by presenting them as malleable objects in the machinations of Great Power interests.

Roderic Davidson, in speaking of the advent of Westernised education in the Ottoman Empire, gives a more nuanced view but one which, nonetheless, speaks of a conscious imperialism.<sup>16</sup> He states that:

the rapid growth of mission schools came in the nineteenth century. These were the years of the great flowering of Protestant overseas missions, of Catholic reaction in kind, and of the new imperialism which led governments and peoples of several European powers to support in the Near East schools purveying their own brand of culture.<sup>17</sup>

Davidson thus invokes a kind of broad-fronted civilizational confrontation in which Protestant missionaries consciously played their part by propagating 'Western' thought throughout the Orient. By its brevity one is left uncertain as to how legitimate it is to speak of a 'Western' missionary movement as a homogeneous entity with uniform aims and effects. The impression, however, is that all missions attempted to export their home cultures and thus acted as a conduit of 'Western' ideas. In relation to my own analysis, while this may be true of the American Presbyterian mission it cannot be said of the Anglican mission which, as shall be demonstrated, attempted strenuously to achieve the opposite results. Furthermore, in the American case the direct link between the missions and political power is not evident either. Once again the formulation of such a narrative by academics, in which Protestant missionary activity is based upon the binary model of 'East' versus 'West', unsurprisingly *produces* a characterisation of missionaries as archetypal Orientalists and arch-imperialists.

The above narratives portray an uncomplicated missionary complicity with imperial power and are unsatisfying in that their veracity seems to be borne-out by the logic of an argument rather than by empirical evidence. This is perhaps unsurprising when

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<sup>16</sup> Roderic H. Davidson, "Westernized Education in Ottoman Turkey," *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: the impact of the West* (London: Saqi, 1990), 166-179.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

one considers that there is a long tradition of representing missionaries as part of a homogeneous and undifferentiated 'Western' influence that pre-dates the Orientalist critique. An example of such a representation of missionary activity can be found in the work of Bernard Lewis, himself described by Edward Said as an Orientalist, who presents missionaries as a component of a broadly conceived 'Western' influence. While Lewis does not suggest that missionaries were agents of imperialism, it is useful to consider his work here as I believe that it forms the foundation of later attitudes which bundle missionaries together with other actors as a collective 'Western' influence upon an inferior Orient. This is rather ironic seeing as Lewis was a prime target of the Orientalist critique, and reflects the fact that while the analysis of a putative Orient was atomised by the critique no corresponding atomisation of the concept of the 'West' seems to have occurred.

The most striking feature of Bernard Lewis's accounts of the formation of modern Turkey and that of the modern Middle East is the almost complete absence of any reference to missionary activity at all. This in itself is a statement of the perceived insignificance of missionary activity as a discernible variant from a more generally conceived 'Western' influence. In *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* Lewis describes the process by which nationalism took hold amongst the Armenian community. He states that:

The change began with the Russian conquest of the Caucasus [...] A stir of hope passed through Turkish Armenia, where, combining with the new national and liberal ideas emanating from the West, it gave rise to an ardent and active Armenian nationalist movement, seeking to restore an independent Armenia.<sup>18</sup>

Arguably the single most important vector in the 'emanation' of national and liberal ideas among the Armenian community was that of the American Protestant missions and their schools, yet they are not even mentioned here.<sup>19</sup> The result of such a treatment is that the narrative generates the impression of an amorphous and homogenous 'Western' influence permeating the lives of 'Orientals'. The lack of agency de-contextualises and depersonalises the encounter into an abstract which

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<sup>18</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 350.

<sup>19</sup> And yet this is the closest we get to mentioning missionary activity within this work.

can be dealt with in a generalising grand narrative of an encounter between civilizations rather than that between individuals or autonomous groups. In *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East* Lewis makes a slightly more direct reference to religious missions when he speaks of them as one of the many vectors carrying Western ideas into the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

Some [teachers] taught in the modern-style schools and colleges that were being set up, in increasing numbers, by Middle Eastern governments; others in schools created by foreign missions and governments as a service to humanity and an instrument of cultural policy.<sup>20</sup>

This is the only reference to missions in the entire book and even this is ambiguous. Does the author mean that foreign missions were instruments of cultural policy or does that refer only to those schools set up by foreign governments? Furthermore, who set up these foreign non-missionary schools, and what was their purpose? The clarifications are not forthcoming and consequently the impression generated is that missionary activity had a political agenda and was a form of cultural self-promotion on the part of an abstract entity that Lewis calls the 'West'. The conflation in this narrative of religious and political motives promotes a perception of the individual missions as being something of an abstract projection of 'Western' civilization. This is perhaps unsurprising in a narrative which more generally reifies both the Orient and the Occident into real and homogeneous cultural entities, a reification which is exemplified in Lewis' clarification of what he means by the East. He starts by explaining, in this post-Cold-War narrative, that there is more than one East to which the historian frequently refers.<sup>21</sup> He states that:

The former Soviet East is not, however, our only point of reference. There is also what one might call, with only apparent tautology, the Oriental East – the many countries, societies, and peoples of Asia and, for that matter, of Africa who, however they may differ among

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<sup>20</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.



themselves, have this much in common; that the Christian or post-Christian civilization of Europe and its daughters is alien to them.<sup>22</sup>

This is therefore a narrative of civilizational divide down the fracture line of religious difference. The 'West' is Christian or post-Christian and the 'Oriental East' is that which is not. In this way the observable differences among 'Easterners' are considered insufficient for us to question their status as Orientals and thus the more important distinction to be made is that 'they', as a cohesive group, are in some fundamental way not like 'us'. The divide between 'East' and 'West' is emphasised and given a 'civilizational' context as follows:

Religion means different things to different people. In the West it means principally a system of belief and worship, distinct from, and in modern times usually subordinate to, national and political allegiances.<sup>23</sup> But for Muslims it conveys a great deal more than that. Islam is a civilization, a term that corresponds to Christendom as well as Christianity in the West. No doubt, many local, national, and regional traditions and characteristics have survived among the Muslim peoples and have gained greatly in importance in modern times, but on all the peoples that have accepted them, the faith and law of Islam have impressed a stamp of common identity, which remains even when faith is lost and the law has been abandoned.<sup>24</sup>

The important Orientalist aspects of this piece can be boiled down to three gross generalisations. Firstly, that Islam can be considered a monolithic entity, the various expressions of which are insufficiently important to warrant a nuanced understanding of the term. Secondly, that the 'West' is a place where religion has been divorced from politics and that the 'Oriental East' represents a region where this disconnect has not been made. Thirdly, that all Orientals, for that is what we are talking about, are impressed with the 'stamp' of Islam from which they are unable to escape, unlike Occidentals who can and have left behind the imprint of their religious traditions. This is an exemplary expression of what I have described, in reference to nineteenth-

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Clearly not true of contemporary or (especially) nineteenth-century North America. It is also a rather dubious statement to make about nineteenth-century Britain.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. One might ask whether this were not also true of the post-Christian West? And if not why not?

century missionaries, as an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* in that Lewis's narrative asserts that Orientals are what they are as a result of the environmental condition of living under the pervasive influence of a monolithic Islam.

Lewis does, however, make a very salient point in his riposte to the Orientalist critique when he mentions that attention has always been upon Western attitudes to the East and not the other way round. While this may be a fair criticism which demands research and analysis of 'Eastern' attitudes concerning the 'West', it does not mitigate his own reification of these two concepts. I would argue, however, that there is no such thing as a generalisable 'Eastern' attitude which could be analysed nor is there any single 'West' which could unambiguously be posited as the object of such an attitude. Furthermore, works such as *Occidentalism*, which seek to mirror the Orientalist critique, fall into exactly this trap of seeing the problem in terms of a binary paradigm of 'East' versus 'West'.<sup>25</sup>

In summary, this section has shown how some authors which one could associate with the Saidian tradition consider missionaries to be agents of an essentially political imperialism, and how one very significant author who rejects the Orientalist critique nonetheless portrays missionaries as undifferentiated from 'Western' civilization broadly conceived. The connection between the two is one of influence and precedent, and its significance is in illustrating how Orientalist stereotypes can be perpetuated in anti-Orientalist narratives.

## 2.2 Individual Agents of Personal Conscience

This section switches focus from the portrayal of missionaries as agents of imperialism to the diametrically opposed view of them as free agents beyond the orbit of the political machinations of empire. A work which does much to dispel notions of the imperialist nature of missionaries to Kurdistan is Sir Denis Wright's

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<sup>25</sup> See for example: Ian Buruma and Avishai Margali, *Occidentalism: a short history of anti-westernism*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2004).

*The English Among the Persians*.<sup>26</sup> Working largely from British Foreign Office records Wright, himself a former ambassador to Iran during the 1960s, portrays the Protestant missionaries of the Persian mission-field during the nineteenth century as religious idealists.<sup>27</sup> The missionaries preaching in the south of the country he describes as rather maverick and sometimes fanatical individuals working under the auspices of the Church Mission Society (CMS). Far from furthering the political objectives of the Foreign Office he states that members of the British Legation to Tehran “found their activities [to be] an embarrassment”<sup>28</sup> and he quotes a senior diplomat as referring to them in 1897 as “a dreadful thorn in our side.”<sup>29</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Mission to the Assyrians, on the other hand, he describes as a far more professional and disciplined but nonetheless non-political endeavour. Wright presents the Anglican mission in terms of a response to repeated calls for assistance from the Patriarch of the Assyrians “to help resist the proselytizing activities of American Presbyterians [and] partly in order to secure British political protection”.<sup>30</sup> The Anglican response to this request, he explains, was, however, purely religious in character.<sup>31</sup> The overall tone of this appraisal is that these missionaries were non-political idealists whose function was if anything detrimental to the political mission of the Embassy.

Donald Bloxham presents a more nuanced standpoint focusing his analysis upon an evaluation of the humanitarian consequences of external political interference within the Ottoman Empire. His book, *The Great Game of Genocide*, is, as with Sonyel, a treatment of the Armenian Genocide within the rubric of Great Power rivalry. Unlike Sonyel however, Bloxham interprets American missionaries in a more sympathetic light as engaged in a purely religious and educational capacity without a direct relationship to the political policies of the United States or Great Britain.<sup>32</sup> Bloxham describes how “missionary activity did not seek to inculcate rebellious or nationalist

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<sup>26</sup> Sir. Denis Wright, *The English Among the Persians During the Qajar Period, 1787-1921* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-121.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 43.

feelings amongst the Armenians.”<sup>33</sup> He continues by saying that as a result of their education which took place predominantly in American mission schools the Armenians “learned something of emancipation”.<sup>34</sup> He concludes that the:

missionary rhetoric of individual emancipation and development surely contributed inadvertently to the growth of nationalism, but the missionaries remained staunchly opposed to the methods and agenda of the later Armenian political parties.<sup>35</sup>

In this narrative missionaries are represented as non-political idealists whose actions had unforeseen consequences, but it says little on the subject of the charge of cultural imperialism. This presentation quite clearly represents Protestant missionaries as the individual agents of their own personal consciences and dismisses the notion of their role as political agents. Equally it depicts the Armenian community as possessed of far greater agency than does Sonyel’s narrative and dispels the notion of their passive status as ‘Oriental’ pawns in a predominately Occidental game of politics beyond their comprehension.

As with Bloxham, Martin Van Bruinessen emphasises the agency of indigenous peoples in his work, *Agha, Sheikh and State*, which remains one of the most influential works of social anthropology on Kurdistan.<sup>36</sup> In reference to the impact of Protestant missionaries upon the political situation, Van Bruinessen focuses upon the events leading up to the 1843 Nestorian massacres. The emphasis of his treatment implies that the British and American missions were essentially religious in nature and not political in their aims but that local communities and leaders assumed their direct connection with British and American imperial power. He explains that the missionaries were welcomed by the Nestorians “because they expected that their governments might help them become their own masters.”<sup>37</sup> In this portrayal both missions are presented as displaying a certain cultural arrogance and a lack of insight into the political consequences of their inter-missionary rivalry, consequently

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Sheikh and State: on the social, political organization of Kurdistan* (Rijswijk: Enroprint/Second print, 1978).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

their actions are presented as ignorant rather than devious.<sup>38</sup> In his narrative the mundane outcome of a war for the soul of the Nestorian community is depicted as a consequence of Nestorian and Kurdish perceptions of the opportunities and threats presented by the missionaries' presence. Van Bruinessen relates that subsequent to contact with the Protestant missionaries "Mar Shimun, the Nestorians' religious leader, arrogated a political power that he had never had before – which sowed discord among the Nestorians".<sup>39</sup> As for the Kurds he states that they "felt threatened, and [that] the missionaries did little to alleviate their fear."<sup>40</sup> This account of Protestant missionaries to the Kurdish region thus presents them as non-political in their intent despite their very real local political impact, an impact which was essentially the result of the assumptions of local leaders rather than the machination of the missionaries themselves.

Another work which does much to redress the portrayal of the Anglicans as the agents of imperialism is that of J. F. Coakley, whose treatment of the Anglican mission is perhaps the definitive historical account of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians. *The Church of the East and the Church of England* is a work of ecclesiastical history and is focused upon a descriptive account of the mission. The Anglican mission is characterised by Coakley as: "that highly illogical – one might say, essentially Anglican – understanding, a non-proselytising mission; [which] tried genuinely to commend the traditions of the Syrian church, and not teach western ways."<sup>41</sup> This could not be further from the idea of cultural imperialism. Coakley points out that "western missions to eastern churches in the nineteenth century"<sup>42</sup> are often portrayed if not as "the conscious agents of great-power foreign policy"<sup>43</sup> then as the "instruments of the kind of cultural imperialism which is nowadays stigmatized as 'orientalism'".<sup>44</sup> Coakley thus challenges the charge of cultural imperialism, but what is interesting is his characterisation of Orientalism as a form of imperialism. To Coakley, it would seem, Orientalism is

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* This is also mentioned by Coakley – "the Patriarch's wish to be confirmed by the Ottoman government as exclusive civil ruler of the ashiret areas of Hakkari, subject only to the Sultan and independently of any Kurdish chiefs." Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 39.

<sup>40</sup> Bruinessen, *Agha, Sheikh and State*, 226.

<sup>41</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

cultural imperialism and it is perhaps this direct correlation between the critique of Orientalism and the accusation of imperialism which has caused many academics to reject the critique out of hand. After all to consider charitable acts such as the establishment of schools and hospitals as manoeuvres in a game of cultural dominance seems a hopelessly cynical explanation of missionary motivation.

In rejection of the idea of cultural imperialism in the case of the Anglican mission, Coakley emphasises the strong distaste among High Church Anglicans for proselytisation and points to the respect shown by these missionaries for an ancient Church which was perceived by them to have preserved something of the simplicity of a pristine Early Christian Church.<sup>45</sup> Coakley reinforces this argument by showing that Anglican ecumenical assistance to the Church of the East was aimed at the restoration of an ancient Church to its former glory. Assistance came in the form of organising and running schools and a printing press through which the Anglican missionaries helped to disseminate among the Syrian community a knowledge of their own literature and religion in the medium of their own language. Such a standpoint is a long way from cultural imperialism. It would thus seem hard, on the basis of Coakley's well evidenced narrative, to argue that the Anglicans were cultural imperialists.

Coakley's assertion of the political neutrality of the Anglican mission is, however, nuanced by what he suggests is a natural and human urge to defend the people with whom the missionaries had become personally involved against the dominance of their enemies. Nonetheless the issue of the non-political nature of the Anglican mission is most directly evidenced in his narrative by reference to the annoyance which the mission regularly caused to the representatives of the British government in the region.<sup>46</sup> Anglican missionary activity, Coakley suggests, was often a burden upon the embassies and was frequently an obstacle to British Foreign Office diplomacy.<sup>47</sup> In short, Coakley's evaluation of the Anglican mission portrays it as a charitable and altruistic venture which dealt fairly with the Syrians and attempted to pursue a culturally sensitive policy with regard to their activities. Coakley's work, however, does not go so far as to analyse the Orientalist justifications which

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<sup>45</sup> See for example: *Ibid.*, 41 and 59.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

underpin the culturally sensitive policy of the mission. As will be shown, the explanations which validated the Anglican policy of cultural sensitivity are recognisably Orientalist, in the sense of a representative style, and are far from the ethical underpinnings of multiculturalism which today's reader might recognise.

A further scholarly account of missionary activity to the Old East Syrian Church can be found in John Joseph's *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, which relates the history of this people and their eventual emergence in the twentieth century as a distinct ethno-political entity.<sup>48</sup> Joseph's narrative presents Protestant missionaries as apart from the ambitions of mundane political power but he nonetheless argues that their very presence in the Ottoman Empire and Persia was bound to excite jealousies and promote dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. To Joseph the activities of the American mission, which often caused disunity within the region, were motivated by a spiritual agenda and not a political one. In this way, while they may seem to further the aims of the Great Powers by weakening the Ottoman State, an appreciation of their objectives reveals that this was not their aim. This is an interesting overview because it represents the American missionaries as neither political agents nor as naïve adventurers, instead it suggests that they considered themselves to be somewhat above the pursuits of the mundane world and answerable only to a higher power.

Joseph's suggestion is that the American missionary world-view combined with a knowledge of the Nestorian's historic missionary tradition to produce a strategy that looked to the East Syrian community as the key to the conversion of the Muslim world in the pursuit of their millennialist goals. Quoting Eli Smith, Joseph makes clear this Presbyterian aspiration to prepare for the imminently arriving empire of Christ. Smith states that the missionary upon reaching Urmia would know that:

he had found a prop upon which to rest the lever that will overturn the whole system of Mohammedan delusion, in the center of which he has fixed himself; that he is lighting a fire which will shine upon the corruption of the Persian on the one side, and upon the barbarities of

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<sup>48</sup> John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: encounters with Western Christian missions, archaeologists, and colonial power* (Leiden; Boston, M.A.: Brill, 2000).

the Kurd on the other, until all shall come to be enlightened by its brightness.<sup>49</sup>

This may sound like a call to political imperialism but it must be borne in mind that, as Joseph makes clear, this aspiration is not related to the mundane political goals of their home nation. The implication of Joseph's argument is that their presence and the responses it generated were not of a political significance in their minds but were part of the greater tribulations which would usher in "the dominion of the Prince of Peace."<sup>50</sup> That is to say, they did not consider their actions political but belonging to a higher religious calling.

From yet another angle, John Guest's *Survival Among the Kurds*, focuses upon the history of the Yezidis and gives an alternative perspective of the role of Protestant missionaries, but one which nonetheless depicts them as essentially non-political. Guest presents Protestant missionaries as well-meaning but somewhat naïve, and perhaps irresponsible, idealists whose missionary activities inadvertently caused hardship and persecution to befall the Nestorian community. As with Joseph, Guest portrays the missionary endeavour as a paternalistic response to providence but also as a somewhat heroic act conducted by maverick male individuals.<sup>51</sup> Guest portrays Protestant missionary self-understanding as a response to a higher calling which is exemplified in his treatment of the actions of Asahel Grant and George Percy Badger in 1843. This relates to the massacre of the Nestorian community in Hakkari by the Kurdish forces of Bedr Khan Beg, and the accusation of responsibility made against these two missionaries in precipitating the outbreak of violence. Guest maintains that the missionaries were surprised by these accusations and refuted them vigorously but his own narrative implies that their actions were in fact somewhat imprudent.<sup>52</sup> The overall effect is that it presents these missionaries as heroic but somewhat naïve, perhaps even incompetent, adventurers. The image evoked is that they were clearly non-political actors but that their actions had inadvertent political consequences which they chose to interpret in a religious context and which, in their view, put their actions beyond the scope of the mere political and temporal world.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>51</sup> John J. Guest. *Survival Among the Kurds: a history of the Yezidis* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 73-81.

<sup>52</sup> Badger's work *The Nestorians and their Rituals* was in part a repost to similar accusations made at the time.



### 2.3 Missionaries as Ambiguous Actors.

The works reviewed so far in this chapter have fallen fairly unambiguously on one side or another of the debate over the agency of Protestant missionaries concerning imperialism. It was noted that those authors who condemned missionaries as unambiguously complicit in the process of imperial expansion did so without a great deal of reference to primary data and relied instead upon the image of missionary activity as part of a broadly conceived 'Western' influence. The objections to this portrayal found in the second category largely dismissed the charge of culpability in the expansion of empire on the basis that missionary activity was motivated by a religious and non-political agenda. Many authors, however, are less emphatic in their evaluation of missionary complicity with imperialism, and in this last section I will evaluate the more nuanced and often ambivalent academic representations of Protestant missions.

I would like to start by discussing an author who is almost contemporary to the missionaries of this study. He is, however, still relevant to present-day academia due to his seminal influence in the creation of the genre of American Security Studies.<sup>53</sup> The celebrated Princeton academic Edward Mead Earle, writing in 1929, starts by underlining the importance of missionary activity in America's encounter with the Orient.

No other American activity in the Near East has been of such extent and consequence as Christian missions. No other has been so long and so earnestly supported by so numerous and so influential a constituency at home. No other has made such persistent claims upon Christian Americans for financial assistance and upon the Government of the United States for diplomatic support.<sup>54</sup>

It can be seen from this quotation that Earle is convinced that there is a connection between missionaries and political power but what is important is the causality which is implied. It is not the government which sends out the missionaries but the

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<sup>53</sup> See: David Ekbladh, "Present at the Creation: Edward Mead Earle and the Depression-Era Origins of Security Studies," *International Security* Vol. 36, No. 3, (Winter 2011-12), Pages 107-141.

<sup>54</sup> Edward Mead Earle, "American Missions in the Near East," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (April 1929), 398.

missionaries who call upon the government, as overseas citizens, for personal protection whilst in the pursuit of their religious activities. The extraterritorial status of American missionaries is an important aspect of Earle's explanation of their perceived nature, and he suggests that their ability to apply diplomatic pressure to ensure their presence in the region against a resistant Ottoman government had made their presence a symbol of foreign domination even though they themselves eschewed such an image.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, this is not the only ambiguous aspect of American missionary activity in Earle's evaluation. In speaking of the hugely emotive issue of the 'Armenian Question'<sup>56</sup> he states that:

In the midst of this political situation, loaded with dynamite, American missionaries were carrying on their work. It is denied that they actively encouraged and aided revolutionary activities. That they were in sympathy with Armenian nationalist aspirations cannot be doubted. American missions were an important factor in the political education of the Armenians according to western formulas. From American missionaries and mission schools Armenians learned anew to cherish their language and historical traditions; became acquainted with western ideals of political, social, and economic progress; acquired more active discontent with their lot and developed an acute sense of superiority to their Moslem peasant neighbors.<sup>57</sup>

What Earle is suggesting is that, despite their political neutrality, in passing on their republican ethos their programs of secular education would unavoidably lead to political consequences. Furthermore, he goes on to state that in their capacity as effectively the only conduit of information about the Near East to an American public their testimony had far reaching political implications of which they must have been aware.

To the American missionary the Armenian national cause owes the education of western public opinion concerning the aspirations of Armenia. No historian of the modern Armenian nation can ignore the

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 402.

<sup>56</sup> The Armenian Question being the name bestowed by European and American observers upon the issue of Armenian nationalism and separatism, and the Ottoman response to this threat to its own unity and sovereignty. An issue which culminated in the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

<sup>57</sup> Earle, *Foreign Affairs*, 403-4.

role of the American missionary in the development of nationalism among this tragic people to whom nationalism has been a pitiless executioner.<sup>58</sup>

This grim portrait of the political and humanitarian consequences of a well-meaning and essentially non-political mission is perhaps the epitome of the representation of the American Protestant missionary as an ambiguous figure. This appraisal of American overseas mission to the Middle East not only highlights the effects of their activities in the mission-field but also points to their role as a conduit of images and representations of the 'Orient' to a home audience, and in this respect Earle is even more scathing in his criticism.

For almost a century American public opinion concerning the Near East was formed by the missionaries. If American opinion has been uninformed, misinformed and prejudiced, the missionaries are largely to blame. Interpreting history in terms of the advance of Christianity, they have given an inadequate, distorted, and occasionally a grotesque picture of Moslems and Islam. [...] In order to raise funds, missionaries, and more recently relief organizations, have often exploited half-truths, with the result that the American mind became closed to the patent fact that all peoples of the Near East, regardless of nationality or religion, have been common victims of common misfortunes.<sup>59</sup>

In this last statement a further dimension of the missionary legacy is revealed. Earle is suggesting that the contribution by missionaries to a discourse of Christian supremacy over an Islamic Orient has contributed to a dangerously unsympathetic perception of the Muslim 'other' and has fed a narrative of 'Western' superiority. This is clearly in line with Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, and alludes to the construction of narratives which perpetuate a stereotypical image of Oriental difference and inferiority.<sup>60</sup> Earle's critique is powerful in suggesting that while American missionaries were altruistic in their intention of converting the world to

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 404.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>60</sup> It is interesting to see such a view articulated fifty years before Said's seminal work and this underlines the fact that such ideas were not entirely new in the 1970s.

Christianity their knowledge production was enormously harmful. His argument is that, despite the best of intentions, altruistic endeavours such as missionary activity can contribute to the creation of inaccurate and value laden representations of the 'other'. However, Earle's argument, which predates the Orientalist critique as proposed by Edward Said, does not suggest that we should consider this to be a form of imperialism but rather a kind of wilful recklessness.

This apparent recklessness certainly makes nineteenth-century American Protestant mission to the Middle East seem puzzlingly naïve to a modern reader, but such projects should be viewed in the light of their underlying ideological and theological foundations. To this end Hans-Lukas Kieser analyses American millennialism and its seminal influence upon American Protestant overseas mission. Kieser describes millennialism as being more than simply theological eschatology but also a powerful ideology; by which he means "ideas within a politically mobilizing discourse and mythologies of world-saving power."<sup>61</sup> This brings up the question as to whether American missionaries should be considered to be 'agents of personal conscience' or whether they can in some real sense be considered to be agents of a political, even an imperial, project. As Kieser puts it:

Are we dealing with a modern ideology, arguably the most successful, the strongest, and the longest lasting of ideologies created since the late eighteenth century? Or are we dealing with spirituality, a universal language of the human heart, a historically and biblically inspired faith, a constant confidence in a constructive global future and the benevolent master of this earth yet to come (the source of this spirituality)?<sup>62</sup>

To this question Kieser does not provide a straightforward yes or no answer, but points out that to American missionaries "there was no fundamental gap between the Gospel, scientific progress, democracy, social change, and enlightened belief in universal human commonality in contrast to innate difference."<sup>63</sup> And it is perhaps to this curious fusion of old testament religion and enlightenment values that we must attribute a great deal of their ambiguity when speaking of their imperialism, for it

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<sup>61</sup> Kieser, *Nearest East*, 8.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

imbues their religious zeal with a seemingly nationalist quality.<sup>64</sup> Kieser also points out that their status as representatives of American culture is also fraught with ambiguity for although they passionately believed in the sanctity of the American nation they were nonetheless at odds with other Americans who did not share their egalitarian views.<sup>65</sup> Kieser makes clear that it was precisely this disunity in American opinion and belief, combined with its consequent disappointments in fulfilling millennial expectations, that fuelled the zeal of American Protestant foreign mission to make amends for past failures.

Millennialist manifest destiny in the early nineteenth century meant, “going Near East,” not colonizing the American West, as it was usually understood. The goal was both to bring and to win peace by fulfilling old obligations toward the Jews, the old churches, and the Bible lands. This millennialist move was all the more manifest as repression and exploitation, not love, shaped the social reality of the young [American] republic.<sup>66</sup>

It is ironic, therefore, that such dissatisfaction with the American national project led to an idealisation of American culture. Kieser describes how the “missionaries did not consistently scrutinize their own home country as a seriously incomplete and deeply questionable, though impressive and instructive, project.”<sup>67</sup> This in turn led to a deepening double standard in the representation of the ‘Near East’ based upon an ingrained ethnocentrism and an assumption that their technological superiority necessarily equated to a superiority in religion and spirituality. Consequently, instead of “fresh, open, and creative encounters, missionaries were tempted to impose their Calvinistic piety on the Near East and to consider, despite better wisdom, American culture as singular, exceptional, and self-sustaining.”<sup>68</sup> In this way it can be seen that Keiser’s analysis presents these missionaries as distinctly ambiguous characters. On the one hand their intention is quite clearly an altruistic attempt to bring universal peace to the earth but simultaneously the historical conditioning of the missionary

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<sup>64</sup> Or perhaps one might say an ‘American Internationalism’, which is itself confusingly ambiguous.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

movement and its millennialist ideology ensured that their projects would be based upon an unshakable certainty in the superiority of their own culture.

Amanda Porterfield also productively explores the mentality of cultural certainty emblematic of American missionaries. In speaking specifically of the American mission to the Nestorian Christians, Porterfield explains that the concept of Republican Motherhood featured as a particularly disruptive and divisive force in the complex social and religious balance of the region.<sup>69</sup> This vision of the role of women in society was conditioned by a particular American historical experience and was at odds with traditional notions prevalent in the region. These ideas not only challenged religious conceptions but also social norms associated with authority, and power and thus exerted a destabilising social and political effect. In this respect the eagerness of American missionaries to spread both their religious beliefs and cultural norms can be seen to have had political effects. Porterfield does not state whether this makes them imperialists or not but does allude to the ambiguity of their status. On the one hand, she states that they had neither the opportunity nor the aspiration to coerce conversion to their religious or cultural standpoint<sup>70</sup> and that “these missionaries were religious volunteers who acted independently of their own government.”<sup>71</sup> On the other, their activities destabilised the local political situation and the social status quo. She states that as “a result of American influence, Christian girls were freer to socialize with Christian boys, but Christian parents were careful to restrict their daughters from contact with Muslim boys”<sup>72</sup>, thus the “diminishment of gender segregation among the Nestorians that occurred as a result of missionary influence became a major point of difference between the Nestorians and their Muslim neighbours.”<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, from the point of view of reception, the American missionaries appeared to be part of Western imperialism to the Muslim majority. Porterfield’s argument is that:

Because religion defined political identity in the Middle East, Muslims naturally interpreted the growing relationship between Americans and

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<sup>69</sup> Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries*, 78.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-1.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 82

Nestorians in political terms [...] For their part the Americans had little appreciation of Islam and little understanding of the role of Islamic law in Middle Eastern government.<sup>74</sup>

The overall picture presented by Porterfield with regard to imperialism is thus that of ambiguity; while overtly politically neutral, their activities inevitably produced politically disruptive outcomes. Porterfield sums this up as follows:

Ironically, American involvement in the Middle East had originated in the religious idealism of missionaries who distanced themselves from politics. In their idealism about Christianity, American missionaries failed to see, or take seriously, the political implications of their influence.”<sup>75</sup>

Another work which identifies the negative effects resultant from ostensibly well-meaning and non-political endeavour is Heleen Murre-van den Burg’s study of the development of Literary Urmia Aramaic. Murre-van den Burg draws attention to the altruistic aims of the American missionaries, which she describes as “intended for the welfare only of the Assyrian Christians”.<sup>76</sup> Stating that the missionaries “brought education, 'living faith', and Western civilization to a small, subjugated, minority of Christians in a Muslim country”,<sup>77</sup> she adds that:

They could not avoid bringing at the same time division and struggle, between the Christians themselves and between the latter and the population surrounding them, thus disrupting the traditional balance between the parties. Once this small minority had acquired self-esteem and powerful friends, it became impossible to return to the old order in which they were lowest in esteem.<sup>78</sup>

As for the Anglican mission, she relates that it was highly valued by the Assyrians and that:

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>76</sup> Murre-van den Burg, *From a Spoken to a Written Language*, 86.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

their respect for the local traditions made them, in the eyes of the Assyrians, an attractive alternative to the Protestant as well as to the Lazarist mission, especially for those Assyrians who were afraid of losing their cultural heritage in contact with the Westerners.<sup>79</sup>

It would be difficult in the light of such an overview to characterise either the Anglicans or the American Protestants as imperialists in the classic sense of those who wished to conquer and dominate a foreign people. Furthermore, the Assyrians themselves are described by Murre-van den Burg as being very receptive to 'Western' innovations.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, all of these boons ultimately led to an intensification of hostilities towards their communities in the Ottoman Empire and Persia and to the erosion of traditional cultural norms. If this can be considered a form of cultural imperialism, then the evidence of Murre-van den Burg would suggest that the term would have to be somewhat attenuated to accommodate the non-coercive practices of these missionaries and the eagerness with which they were taken up by a receptive target community. On this point she relates that:

The Protestant missionaries were careful not to introduce any changes that would not be approved of by the Assyrians. They waited till they were asked to establish schools in the villages, they waited till they were asked to preach in the Assyrian churches, and they did not encourage the people to break with their own traditions. Although the Protestant missionaries were convinced of the superiority of their own Western culture and Western type of Christianity, they understood that the only way to transmit their cultural values to the Assyrian Christians was to respect their culture in the first place.<sup>81</sup>

It can be seen therefore that the American missionaries were intent upon disseminating aspects of their culture but that their method was anything but coercive. In the sense of cultural arrogance and the desire to disseminate aspects of their own culture they can perhaps be considered cultural imperialists, but it should be borne in mind that such a designation carries with it a very different set of associations to that of the imperialist in a more traditional definition of the term. In a

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*



later work Murre-van den Burg does, however, point out that missionaries from all denominations during the nineteenth-century were “major representatives and protagonists”<sup>82</sup> of a particular “Christian Orientalism.”<sup>83</sup> The juxtaposition of their obvious Orientalism against their non-coercive and frequently respectful methods is at the heart of their ambiguity with regard to imperialism. In summary Murre-van den Burg argues that it seems “hardly fair to blame the nineteenth-century missionaries for not having foreseen”<sup>84</sup> the hardships which would befall the Assyrian communities as a consequence of their missionary activities, and points out that the changes which the missionaries facilitated were eagerly sought after by the Assyrians themselves. Concluding that:

Whether the new values are worth the loss, or the partial loss, of the older ones, is now subject for debate. The Assyrians in the nineteenth century had few doubts about this choice; they appear to have been as eager to accept modernization as were the missionaries to share it with them.<sup>85</sup>

Other academics working on the impact of missionary activity in the region are equally ambivalent in their appraisal of the American missionaries. In a 2002 article Jeremy Salt pursues the issue of ambiguity from a distinctly Saidian approach. Salt’s thesis is that, although the intentions of Protestant missionaries were altruistic, they were guided by an ethnocentricity which ensured the production of knowledge supportive of a more aggressive imperialistic Orientalism. Firstly he draws attention to the mind-set of Protestant missionaries with regard to the Ottoman Empire as being essentially adversarial.<sup>86</sup>

The path to gospel truth was strewn with obstacles: the corruption and misrule of the “Muhammadan” Ottoman government; the fanaticism and narrow-mindedness of the ecclesiastics of the Eastern churches; the ignorance of the “nominal” Christians needing to be revived and

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<sup>82</sup> Murre-van den Burg, *New Faith in Ancient Lands*, 17.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Murre-van den Burg, *From a Spoken to a Written Language*, 86.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

<sup>86</sup> Jeremy Salt, “Trouble Wherever They Went: American Missionaries in Anatolia and Ottoman Syria in the 19th Century,” *Altruism and Imperialism: Western Cultural and Religious Missions in the Middle East Occasional Papers 4*, Edited by Eleanor H. Tejirian and Reeva Spector Simon (New York: Middle East Institute Columbia University, 2002), 155.

brought to a higher form of Christianity; and swirling all around them, Muslims led astray by a false prophet.<sup>87</sup>

This mentality, he argues, put them immediately in a situation of confrontation with traditional Ottoman society which he characterises as a more or less heterogeneous collective which attempted to avoid polemical religious confrontations within its polity. It was this threat to Ottoman authority and cohesion, he suggests, which made them a danger to the Porte and to the local Notables alike.<sup>88</sup> Missionaries were, he continues, thus regarded by local populations as representing European power which appeared in their eyes in “a variety of disguises but always with the same purpose of domination and the control of minds as well as territory and resources.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore, regardless of their non-political aspirations, Protestant missionaries were, Salt suggests, always considered by the populations of the Middle East as directly associated with the political and economic forces of European empires which sought to dominate the Orient.

Salt continues by saying that the Protestant missionaries came “fully equipped with the notions of racial and civilizational superiority common to European man.”<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, he argues, that in their own minds the American and British Protestants “came as representatives of the Anglo-Saxon “race” and the representatives more generally of a superior civilization in all material and spiritual aspects.”<sup>91</sup> Salt cautions, however, that this does not mean that they were “conscious agents of imperialism”<sup>92</sup> but that they indirectly assisted in a process of domination. He argues, as an example, that their calls for the protection of Ottoman Christians inevitably strengthened “the case being argued from time to time for European intervention on humanitarian grounds.”<sup>93</sup> However, somewhat paradoxically, he also argues that missionary activity could often be contrary to the pursuit of imperial interests, stating that to the European and American embassies:

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 166.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

the missionary presence in the Ottoman Empire was frequently the cause of frustration and irritation. The missionaries often made demands that could not be met, or they would get themselves into awkward situations that the diplomats would have to sort out, and that only caused strain between [the diplomats] and the Ottoman government.<sup>94</sup>

The paradox of missionaries being both imperialists and anti-imperialists in this sense highlights their ambiguous status and demonstrates the scope and diversity of the phenomenon.<sup>95</sup> Ultimately Salt's impression of the missionary legacy is that of irony, that it was the secular ideas which they disseminated through their schools and colleges which left the most lasting impression upon the Middle East rather than their religious ideas and a proselyte community.<sup>96</sup> In conclusion he states that:

The Americans of the ABCFM saw themselves as doing God's work on earth and not as serving the temporal interests of any particular power whatever their individual sympathies and affinities. This made them unreliable allies. It is for this reason that their place in imperial and colonial history is so idiosyncratic, even though they served "Western interests" in the general sense by their presence and the values they disseminated.<sup>97</sup>

Salt's view seems to be, therefore, that American Protestant missionaries were ambiguous in their agency with regards to imperialism. Their activities and knowledge production show aspects of cultural imperialism in that they disseminated 'Western' values through an uncompromising and confrontational rhetoric which conditioned attitudes towards the Middle East, the negative consequences of which went far beyond their well-meaning intentions. In this view they are thus idiosyncratic and unconscious agents of imperialism due to their ethnocentric and racist standpoint and the actions of others. I would also argue that the oddness of their position and their apparent ambiguity in imperial history results from the diverse meanings which can be ascribed to the term imperialism. As argued in chapter one

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* Brackets in original.

<sup>95</sup> See: chapter 1, section *Missionaries in the Context of Imperialism*, for Said's treatment of Joseph Conrad with regard to this issue.

<sup>96</sup> Salt, *Altruism and Imperialism*, 166.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

this term can refer either to *conscious activities* to promote a political agenda or to a frequently unconscious *involvement in processes* which consolidate imperial power through the mechanisms of discursive pressure: the ambiguity arising through the conflation of one usage of the term with the other – although this is scarcely surprising as there is a great deal of overlap between the two concepts.

Another work focusing specifically upon the encounter between the Armenian community and American Protestant missionaries, is that of Barbara Merguerian's essay on the establishment of the American Consulate in Kharpert.<sup>98</sup> Similarly to Earle, Merguerian points out the contradictions implicit in a non-political religious mission which nonetheless relied for its survival upon the diplomatic support of foreign governments.<sup>99</sup> She concludes by relating the U.S. Consul's own doubts as to just how non-political the missionaries could be whilst teaching ethical principles which were implicitly political.<sup>100</sup> Her own analysis underlines the fact that their educational programs, which emphasised "individual initiative, progress, justice, and freedom, did not particularly reconcile Armenians to Turkish rule."<sup>101</sup> She adds that the educational programs were also increasing the differentiation that already existed between the Armenians and their Muslim neighbours and over time engendered an attitude of "envy, scorn, and disapproval."<sup>102</sup>

Merguerian's narrative represents American missionaries as both deeply associated with unsought after political effects and yet simultaneously independent of the political interests of Empire. In this evaluation of the relationship between missionaries and the power of a foreign nation one might even venture, as with Earle's narrative, that the causality is reversed; that missionaries were not the agents of political power but that the political agents of empires became the tools of the missionaries' religious designs. One might add that these missionary activities conflicted with American political 'interests' and simultaneously propagated a particularly American civic ideal of anti-imperialism. There is a paradox here, in that

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<sup>98</sup> Barbara Merguerian, "'Like a Policeman in a Mob': The Establishment of the U.S. Consulate in Kharpert, Turkey, 1901-1905," *Armenian Perspectives: 10th Anniversary Conference of the Association Internationale des Etudes Arméniennes, School of Oriental and African Studies*, ed. Nicholas Awde (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997), 293-309.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 295-6.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

they exported anti-imperialist values by virtue of the diplomatic pressure which could be brought bear through the flexing of imperial muscle. This seems to demonstrate the potential force of discursive pressures which could lead to the spreading of cultural values against the interests of a political imperialism, and thus reverses the paradigm of a centralizing Metropole directing the activities of its agents in the periphery. It also emphasises the potential of discursive forces to mobilise the power of imperial might to serve an ostensibly non-political religious agenda.

The question of the connection between missionary activity and the support provided to it by imperial agents and institutions is a subject dealt with by Heather Sharkey in her account of American evangelical mission to Egypt during the nineteenth century.<sup>103</sup> Although, as has already been mentioned, American Protestant missionary activities frequently ran contrary to the imperial interests of Britain and America, it is nonetheless fair to say that the protection afforded them by those powers does much to cast into question their avowed neutrality. To this end Sharkey reminds us that today “many of the postcolonial historians who are based in major research universities regard missionaries as agents or tools of imperialism.”<sup>104</sup> Sharkey’s own standpoint, however, is somewhat more nuanced and she states that their experiences make “a case study in the ambiguity of power.”<sup>105</sup> She characterises the spirit of missionary evangelism as resembling “the spirit of British imperialism”<sup>106</sup> but cautions “that to say that missionaries shared the aggressive rhetoric of British imperialism is not to say that missions and British Empire were wholly coterminous or mutually supporting.”<sup>107</sup> Sharkey goes on to say that American Presbyterians:

were purveyors of American culture, and their Christianity – whether they realized it or not – was infused with American customs and attitudes. Among these was arguably an American-style privileging of

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<sup>103</sup> Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

individualism over families and communities, and of individual religious faith and conviction over collective traditional practice.<sup>108</sup>

This brings up the question of whether we can therefore consider them, if not the agents of the political imperialism of Britain or America then, agents of a kind of religious or cultural imperialism. To this question Sharkey quotes Andrew Porter who argues that it is “impossible to speak in any straightforward way of ‘religious’, ‘ecclesiastical’, or ‘missionary’ Imperialism. Such hard-and-fast categories are almost meaningless.”<sup>109</sup> But nonetheless, Sharkey insists that:

It is hard to avoid the term “imperial Christianity” in the context of missions to Muslims during [the period 1882-1918] because, far from extolling a gentle “gospel of love”... American and British missionaries described evangelization, very clearly and on many occasions, as war.<sup>110</sup>

In this context the Presbyterian overseas missionary movement shares much of the self-confident and confrontational spirit of the British Empire, at least on a rhetorical level, but one has to bear in mind the absence of coercion which sets it apart from formal political empires. This already ambiguous picture is thrown into more complication by the fact that the mission to Egypt relied for its very existence, as a mission in foreign territories, upon diplomatic, economic and political pressure. As Sharkey puts it, the American Presbyterian missionaries in Egypt were protected “by the armor of British imperial power and later by mounting American global influence”<sup>111</sup> and “thought of themselves not only as Christian evangelizers but as ambassadors for the United States and as promoters of American culture and modernity.”<sup>112</sup> As such it would seem that in Sharkey’s view it is impossible to ignore the connection between these American Presbyterian missionaries and imperialism, but it seems equally clear that this relationship does not make them imperialists in the full sense of the term. Instead they occupy an ambiguous position, not only caught up in the processes of imperialism but also expounding their own form of

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

imperialist rhetoric which tied religion to culture in a discourse which disempowered local forms of spirituality.

The issue of disempowerment is a subject also discussed by Michael Marten in an analysis of Scottish Presbyterian mission to the Jewish communities of Palestine. I was at first inclined to categorise his work under the heading of missionaries as agents of an unambiguous imperialism, but Marten is clear that mission history should be treated as a dialectic.<sup>113</sup> On the one hand he points out the altruistic aims of the mission from the point of view of missionary self-understanding:

their perception of themselves was not only that they were fulfilling what they understood to be the biblical imperatives, but that they were being altruistic in their desire to share what they felt had benefited them.<sup>114</sup>

On the other he argues that the missionaries were, nonetheless, “intrinsically connected to the world around them”<sup>115</sup> and that they came to Palestine with the authority vested in them by their association with Britain as an imperial power. Marten argues that this connection was not purely symbolic but can also be detected in their methods and rhetoric, and that this is most evident in the manner in which the Scottish missionaries represented the Jews of Palestine in their textual output.

‘The Jews’ were subjects of the missionaries’ own world-view and in this context were in need of conversion to Christianity, or to put it another way, needed to be converted to Christianity in order to fulfil the Scots’ own perceptions of the place of ‘the Jews’ in the divine economy, thus removing from ‘the Jews’ any identity they might wish to define for themselves – in Said’s terms, they had been ‘converted’ to perform a function for the Western missionaries, and were then ready to undergo a conversion to Christianity.<sup>116</sup>

In terms of the theoretical model of my thesis, this is a form of epistemic violence, in that it denies the agency of the ‘Oriental Other’ and precludes the self-representation

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<sup>113</sup> Michael A. Marten, *Attempting to Bring the Gospel Home: Scottish Missions to Palestine 1839-1917* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006).

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

of the 'Other' within the hegemonic narrative of imperial expansion. Furthermore, Marten suggests that the Scottish Presbyterian policy of proselytisation, though ostensibly altruistic, was essentially destructive because "they sought to destroy existing belief structures and create for their targets a plausible new belief system."<sup>117</sup> In this way he indicates what he sees as a confluence between their aims and objectives and "a colonial mentality and imperial framework of western behaviour and thought".<sup>118</sup> Thus:

If Europe's image of other lands at this time can be described as 'an amplifier, or a long shadow, making their own sensations more audible or visible to them ... [with] room for all kinds of fantasy, credulity, deception and self-deception, and the development of stock responses', then the image Scottish missionaries had of 'the Jews' can be seen as part of this kind of imperialistic discourse – self-definition by 'the Jews' (individually and collectively) was not seen as necessary (or desirable).<sup>119</sup>

In this view what makes such a discourse imperialistic is the attempt to dictate the terms of the encounter from the point of view of an assumed superiority in combination with a situation of power disequilibrium. What makes the particular case of the Scottish missionaries ambiguous is their clear belief that their intentions were altruistic and their disdain of coercion as a method of achieving these aims. In Marten's view it would appear that there is no real ambiguity but rather that their imperialism lies in their ineluctable connection to the culture in which their identities were shaped. To be an imperialist in this sense, however, is not necessarily to ascribe a conscious willingness towards projects of political and military conquest but such an attitude may, nonetheless, limit the possibilities of resistance to imperialism open to those who would oppose it. In this way it is clear that imperialism as a concept can denote a variety of registers with different associations to consciousness and culpability, and that it is this variety of available historical judgements which gives rise to their apparent ambiguity.

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*



Another author whose work engages with the concept of cultural imperialism is Michael Zirinsky, whose paper “Onward Christian Soldiers”<sup>120</sup> is an analysis of the encounter between Protestant American missionaries and the Iranian people.<sup>121</sup> Similarly to my own analysis Zirinsky asks whether one can consider American missionaries to be agents of imperialism or whether, acting solely out of a moral sense of duty to humanity, they were indifferent to the advancement of American political interests. His response to this challenge, one imposed upon him by the title of the conference, is to construct a theoretical binary between ‘imperialists’ and ‘altruists’. The result of this analysis leads Zirinsky to sum up his paper as follows:

The American missionaries in Iran were creatures of the age of imperialism. The accusations hurled at them by scholars and Iranian nationalists, that they were a part of American imperialist expansionism, do have a basis in fact. Nevertheless, in their own minds they were entirely devoted to the welfare of others. When considered in the full light of their history, it seems clear that the missionaries were altruists.<sup>122</sup>

One would imagine, therefore, that if they were altruists then surely they were not imperialists, but Zirinsky nuances his conclusion by adding that to themselves they were not imperialists but to others they were. This seems to imply that any such judgement is dependent upon one’s point of view, and he qualifies his conclusion by explaining that:

when viewed from an Iranian perspective, the history of American missionary activity in Iran is clearly a major part of the history of imperialism in Iran. American missionaries did not perceive themselves as imperialists. But they could hardly be seen otherwise by Iranians.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Michael Zirinsky, “Onward Christian Soldiers: Presbyterian Missionaries and the Ambiguous Origins of American Relations with Iran,” *Altruism and Imperialism: Western Cultural and Religious Missions in the Middle East*, Occasional Papers 4, eds. Eleanor H. Tejirian & Reeva Spector Simon (New York: Columbia University, 2002), 236-52.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 236. Zirinsky’s focus is thus upon both the East and West Persia missions under the ABCFM and the PCUSA Board of Foreign Missions.

<sup>122</sup> Zirinsky, *Altruism and Imperialism*, 252.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

This opaque explanation seems to be somewhat ambiguous and turns imperialism into something of a subjective judgement. This brings us to the dilemma of intention versus reception. The charge of imperialism, either conscious or unconscious, must surely be reflected in either their actions or their knowledge production as this is the clearest evidence of their intention, and the question of reception tells us little of the nature of the missionaries themselves and more about the prejudices of a third party's assumptions. Nonetheless, as has been shown, it is entirely possible to consider missionaries to be imperialists despite their intentions to be otherwise, what is important in this evaluation, however, is that such unintentional or unconscious imperialism should be evidenced from the record of their actions rather than from the image ascribed to them by those they encountered.

The challenging of simplistic explanatory narratives of Protestant missionary engagement with the Middle East is an idea also explored by Ussama Makdisi in his *Artillery of Heaven*.<sup>124</sup> In this work the engagement between American Protestant missionaries and the Maronite Christian community in the region of Mount Lebanon is treated through the lens of a single and extraordinary convert - As'ad Shidyaq. In his portrayal of these events Makdisi illustrates how the intricacy of the encounter and the intelligence of Shidyaq's response have been obscured by dominant historical narratives which have idealised either the American mission, the Maronite community, or an anti-imperialist Arab nationalist history.<sup>125</sup> By integrating diverse archival sources Makdisi challenges these contradictory accounts to reveal a nuanced event which has been all but obliterated by the value laden generalisations of these hegemonic narratives. This encounter he characterises as neither a clash of civilizations nor even of cultures, but rather a collision between "a particular moment in American history [and] an entirely different moment in Ottoman Arab history".<sup>126</sup>

There is in Makdisi's portrayal nothing to suggest that American Protestant missionaries could be considered to be political agents of the expansionist mercantile interests of America.<sup>127</sup> On the subject of cultural imperialism, Makdisi

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<sup>124</sup> Ussama Samir Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American missionaries and the failed conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 88. One could add to this definition that, not only was it a moment in American history but, it was also only one of many positions an American could hold at that particular moment.

<sup>127</sup> Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 63.

argues that European and American missionaries “have been stigmatized by their relationship with colonization”<sup>128</sup> but he warns that:

To denounce missionaries as cultural imperialists is also to misunderstand the often ambivalent location missionaries occupied within their own societies as well as in foreign fields. And it is to ignore the polyvalent registers of native worlds and the deliberate choice made by many individuals such as As‘ad Shidyaq to associate with foreign missionaries.<sup>129</sup>

In the context of the mission to the Maronite community Makdisi reasons that due to their inability to coerce the charge of an overt imperialism is difficult to maintain,<sup>130</sup> but that “when missionaries worked more directly in collaboration with Western colonial powers in the region, particularly in British-occupied Egypt or in French-occupied Lebanon, the charge of cultural imperialism becomes more tenable”.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, their attitude and pedagogy can be seen as an aspiration to replace the indigenous culture with their own ‘superior’ religion and way of life.<sup>132</sup> “The history of Anglo-American mission work is,”<sup>133</sup> he continues, “to a large extent the history of cultural imperialism manqué.”<sup>134</sup> Makdisi urges:

not to dismiss out of hand the association of nineteenth-century American missionaries with imperialism but to study the relationship more profoundly. There is no need to deny what is obvious: as much as the term “cultural imperialism” paints an admittedly broad stroke, the term has resonated for the simple reason that Western, including American, missionaries did overwhelmingly justify the subordination, if not always the ethnic cleansing or extermination, of native peoples during a genocidal nineteenth-century.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-7.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

While I am uncomfortable with the generalisations implicit in the above quotation it is made within the context of more specific evidence of the historical development of the American missionary movement. Makdisi is careful to demonstrate that the history of Protestant mission in the United States reveals that despite their concern for the welfare of the indigenous population they nonetheless became implicated with the coercive colonisation of the North American continent. Not only does this demonstrate how Protestant American missionaries could find their charitable enterprises subverted by their association with the institutions of power but it also frames, Makdisi argues, the ethos and method of their subsequent missionary projects overseas.<sup>136</sup> That framing was to present their evangelizing message within the context of the cultural superiority of their American identities, and thus “the scriptural commission to go and make disciples of all nations was tied to historical, racial, and cultural assumptions that emanated from a more recent American past”.<sup>137</sup> Or, “put more bluntly, it was the translation of a missionary ethos that arose in a colonialist America in which missionaries were cultural imperialists into a world where they were not.”<sup>138</sup> Makdisi concludes that he has “deliberately resisted the idea of labeling the American missionaries”<sup>139</sup> as cultural imperialists because:

even though American missionaries became ever more explicitly racist as the nineteenth century progressed, and were increasingly determined to distinguish themselves from the very natives they converted and educated, they were not, properly speaking, cultural imperialists. They could not coerce directly, nor could they hope to rely on the coercive context of a colonial state to facilitate their establishment as their Puritan forebears had done in early America.<sup>140</sup>

Makdisi highlights that their status is not entirely free of all associations with their settler colonialist roots. Speaking of the establishment of ‘native’ Protestant communities in the Middle East he relates that:

Even as more educated, more articulate, and more confident individuals emerged from the nascent native Protestant community,

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-7.

most, but significantly not all, missionaries firmly adhered to a more pronounced racial hierarchy. This hierarchy increasingly idealized America, orientalized the East, and presumed to speak for the natives in a conversation about mission conducted mainly with American critics and supporters rather than with the people the missionaries had ostensibly come to save.<sup>141</sup>

This overview of the ambiguous status of American Protestant mission with regard to imperialism highlights once again the different registers in which the term can be used; e.g. as either a conscious and coercive activity or as involvement in processes which strengthen and support a discourse of superiority and domination. It would seem that to Makdisi cultural imperialism requires a certain degree of coercion to give the term its full force but that simultaneously there still remains certain elements of cultural imperialism in the non-coercive activities of these missionaries.

Another author whose work includes the intersection between American political interests and the Protestant missionary calling is that of Michael Oren, and he provides an interesting overview in the tradition of the grand narrative. His book *Power, Faith & Fantasy* traces the history of America's foreign policy toward the Middle East and proposes that this was dominated by these three distinct yet overlapping preoccupations. According to Oren's argument American missionaries active in the Middle East did not pursue the political or economic interests of their home nation but they were associated with its power which secured their safety in the region. Oren describes the American missionary urge as infused with a "blend of piety and patriotism, numerous Americans were prepared to save the world spiritually, by teaching the Gospel, as well as politically, by promulgating freedom."<sup>142</sup> An important notion which is prompted by Oren's narrative is that to promulgate ideas of political freedom is not necessarily coterminous with acting as an agent of 'Western' imperialism. In fact one might reflect, as mentioned earlier, that when those ideas are of an anti-imperialistic nature then the spread of such ideas could hardly be further from imperialism in the sense of a formal political project.

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>142</sup> Michael B. Oren. *Power, Faith & Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 87.

With regard to the judgment as to whether American Protestant missionaries should be considered to be imperialists, Oren is clear, stating that the “absence of imperialist and economic agenda distinguished the [American] Middle East missionaries not only from their counterparts in the United States, but also from the European preachers who often doubled as government agents.”<sup>143</sup> To Oren this seems sufficient to place them beyond the charge of political agency. The dissemination of religious and secular principles amongst foreign peoples is frequently interpreted as cultural imperialism, and Oren states that in the case of the indigenous American communities cultural imperialism in its darkest forms can be observed. Furthermore, he states that the “confluence of divinely ordained missions and state-sanctioned might was emblematic of the Manifest Destiny era both in North America and in the Middle East.”<sup>144</sup> This suggests that in Oren’s opinion American missionaries, though not agents of political power, would have welcomed American military and economic might to back up their own projects of cultural-religious promotion. Oren argues that “American missionaries in the Middle East viewed Manifest Destiny not as a blueprint for conquering territory but rather as a warrant for capturing souls and minds.”<sup>145</sup> Therefore, as with Makdisi, Oren seems to be suggesting that American missionaries active in the Middle East during the this period were cultural imperialists *manqué* who lacked the military support necessary to bring their plans to fruition.

An earlier work of interest to this thesis is Wadie Jwaideh’s *The Kurdish National Movement*.<sup>146</sup> This work is instructive for its treatment of the aforementioned 1843 Nestorian massacre and gives perhaps the most in-depth and detailed analysis of the rise to power of Bedr Khan Beg of Bohtan. Jwaideh gives an account of the complexity of the local and regional political situation and the local forces involved in the tragedy but nonetheless maintains that the English and American missionaries were responsible for weakening the Nestorians’ ability to repel the invaders by sowing disunity through their inter-missionary struggle for what he terms their

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-1. Oren dates the Manifest Destiny era to the period from the early 1840s to the end of the century.

<sup>145</sup> Oren, *Power, Faith & Fantasy*, 131.

<sup>146</sup> Although Jwaideh’s work was not published until after his death the majority of his research was apparently conducted during the 1950s, thus my reference to moving back to the middle of the nineteenth century.

“spiritual mastery over the Nestorians”.<sup>147</sup> He states that some authors have attributed full culpability for the massacres to the “rivalry between English and American missionaries”,<sup>148</sup> but that in the final analysis “the invasion and the massacre of the Nestorians had several causes, and all of these elements no doubt contributed to it in varying degrees.”<sup>149</sup>

Jwaideh’s critique is that Kurdish perceptions at the time saw missionaries as potential whistle-blowers to external political forces and that this combined with their fears that missionary efforts would build up the economic power of local Christians.<sup>150</sup> It was these perceptions, he argues, more than the reality of the political pressure which missionaries could actually bring to bear, which led to greater animosity between Christians and Muslims and ultimately to massacres which aimed at reducing a potential threat from within. It seems clear from this portrayal that Jwaideh saw Protestant mission to Kurdistan as an essentially religious affair and not a political intrigue. His narrative represents the British and American missionaries as innocent of the charge of attempting to promote the political ‘interests’ of their home nations. To Jwaideh the ambiguity of their nature, however, lies in their perceived function as emergent local political power brokers who inadvertently gave weight to local Muslim fears and gave false hopes to the local Christian community. Their actions, he suggests, did not further the political interests of the imperial powers of Europe or the commercial ‘interests’ of America but their very presence destabilised the region. In this sense it is difficult to see these missionaries as agents of imperialism but neither can they be seen as politically neutral from the point of view of local actors. Furthermore, their role as eye-witnesses produced portrayals of these events as Muslim violence upon defenceless Christians and consequently confirmed Orientalist stereotypes of the Muslim ‘other’. Once again this brings up the distinction between intention and reception; while their intentions may have been benign, their reception by local actors and thus their representation by later historians invokes a supportive connection between these missionaries and imperialism.

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<sup>147</sup> Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: its origins and development* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 67.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-70.

I will close this discussion of the nature of missionary activity with reference to an essay by Andrew Porter which throws light upon this relationship in what I consider to be a very constructive manner. Porter suggests that “one might say, certainly in the British case, that the natural condition of missions and governments was predominantly one of mutual suspicion and wariness.”<sup>151</sup> This is far from a conception of missionaries as a religious arm of imperial interests and instead evokes a nuanced conception of overlapping yet divergent needs and obligations. Porter suggests that the question of whether missionaries should be considered agents of imperialism should be rephrased as, “in what [particular] circumstances and why did missions and imperial authorities or indigenous governments come to rely on each other?”<sup>152</sup> Porter continues:

It is now becoming commonplace to interpret missionary enterprise as of critical importance in the construction of modern European empires. Many scholars now argue that the importance of political and economic analysis has been allowed for too long to overshadow the critical importance of culture and ideology. Empires have been held together in a settled imperial hierarchy less by material connections than by an integrated “colonial discourse.”<sup>153</sup>

It seems that Porter is suggesting that the Saidian critique has itself become a hegemonic discourse. My concern is that there seems to be an assumption within this hegemonic critique of the homogeneity of ‘Western’ cultures, and the evocation of a binary of opposition between ‘East’ and ‘West’ remains axiomatic. The missionaries can be seen, Porter suggests, as a crucial mechanism in the articulation of this discourse through the presentation of a Christian versus a non-Christian world. However, Porter adds that their activities were often of constructive consequence to the development of local cohesion and identity rather than being of use to a centralising Metropole.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, he argues that “the international dimensions of both Catholic and Protestant work are sufficiently important to make it

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<sup>151</sup> Andrew Porter, “Imperialism, Altruism, and Missionary Enterprise: the British Protestant experience since the late eighteenth century,” *Altruism and Imperialism: Western Cultural and Religious Missions in the Middle East Occasional Papers 4*, Edited by Eleanor H. Tejirian and Reeva Spector Simon (New York: Middle East Institute Columbia University, 2002), 5.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-10.



difficult to discuss missions and their impact only in bilateral terms.”<sup>155</sup> Finally, the diversity of missionary activity both between denominations and over time makes it impossible to meaningfully generalise about their nature as either altruists or imperialists and “the language of an all-embracing “imperial project” in common use today imposes a quite unhelpful impression of coordinated and coherent planning on our subject.”<sup>156</sup> These points are convincing in presenting a view of Protestant missionary activity as fragmented and diverse and as deserving study on the level of micro-histories. My thesis therefore takes these final remarks of Porter as a useful starting point of uncertainty from which to proceed in the specific study of the two missions of my research.

The above works have shown a distinct diversity of interpretation of missionary complicity with imperialism which highlights a definite lack of consensus within the academy. The relationship accorded between missionaries and political power ranges from that of agents of imperialism to agents of personal conscience. Those who attribute an unambiguous political role to missionaries as the agents of imperialism, seem to do so without rigorously demonstrating this connection by recourse to the evidence of the missionaries’ specific activities or knowledge production. As a result this characterisation seems to derive more from the logic of an argument which posits the ‘West’ as a more or less cohesive force which sought to dominate the ‘East’ than it does from any actual proof of missionary complicity. My assertion is that missionary engagement with the Kurdish region seems to be a more complex phenomenon than this binary model can accommodate.

Conversely, those works which have presented missionaries as non-political altruists who were unambiguously detached from the expansion of empires often seem to do so from the basis of more clearly defined evidence. The diversity of missionary thought and action is more clearly portrayed in these histories and one gets a real sense of how ‘Western’ influence in the region has been a somewhat fragmented phenomenon. The question which seems unanswered in these narratives, however, is how these observations relate to the assertions of the Orientalist critique. This is of course partly down to the fact that some of these works pre-date the critique, but those which do not seem simply to side-step the question. It seems useful, therefore,

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

to engage in an analysis of the knowledge production of these missionaries from the point of view of the Orientalist critique with an eye to placing these apparent anomalies in the context of that critique.

Finally, those works which represent missionaries as ambiguously positioned with regard to imperialism have provided some fascinating insights into the complexity and diversity of missionary engagement in the region. Their arguments seem to be on the whole more compelling and rounded than the more basic portrayal of missionaries as either the agents of imperialism or as altruists. This thesis will, therefore, endeavour to present an analysis of the knowledge production of two Protestant missions in the context of the Orientalist critique with an eye to the problematic of their ambiguous positioning with regard to imperialism.

### Chapter Three – Orientalism and Protestant Mission

This chapter looks at the primary data constituted by the personal and published writings of the missionaries of this study and analyses their knowledge production in terms of its Orientalist style. The chapter addresses the first research question of my thesis, namely; does the knowledge production of these missionaries exhibit an Orientalist style, and if so what form does this Orientalism take?<sup>1</sup> In order to achieve this objective the analysis looks for the presence of terms used by the missionaries to represent the 'Orient' and 'Orientals' as if they were examples of a generic type, and identifies prevalent themes within their narratives which explain the existence of these predictable categories. In this chapter I also look at the relationship between the diametrically opposed views of the two missions on the subject of proselytisation and explore the connection between this issue and the style of Orientalism which can be said to be adopted by each.

The chapter is divided into three sections: the first section sets the scene by examining the missionaries' representations of the Orient as a geographical space defined by religion; the second examines in more detail the particular mode of representing the 'Oriental' which is displayed by the missionaries of the Anglican mission; while the third outlines the mode of representation which is displayed by the missionaries of the American Presbyterian mission.

As was stated in chapter one, the historical focus of this analysis is that of the high imperial era of European expansion roughly corresponding to the range 1870 to the beginning of the First World War. This period is important to the study of Orientalism because it represents a time of unparalleled European and American optimism and self-confidence which should theoretically lend itself to the most unambiguous expressions of both Orientalism and imperialism. I have, however, allowed myself to slip slightly outside of this date range so as to include some reference to the earlier pioneers of mission when I have felt that their contribution is particularly important to the formation of a mission ethos or where their commentaries are useful in contextualising the mission.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Chapter 1, section - *Methodology*.

### 3.1 An Oriental Realm of 'Mohammedan' Domination

The focus of this first section of chapter three is an examination of how the missionaries, of both missions, represented the mission-field to which their calling had led them. It explores the way in which this land and its peoples were defined by these missionaries and looks at the way in which meaning was attributed to this geographical space; meanings which, as will be shown, embrace physical space, civilization, race, religious fidelity and the working of a divine plan.

In order to determine whether these representations can be considered as Orientalist or not I shall be looking for evidence of certain Orientalist motifs and modes of representation. With regard to motifs, I shall identify the use of terms which indicate Orientalism, such as 'Orient' and 'Oriental' or substitute words which define the mission-field and its occupants as both undifferentiated and oppositional to the 'Occident' and the 'Occidental'. What is important here is not so much the choice of words as the way in which they are deployed to infer homogeneity to a geographical region which is in fact diverse and differentiated. Nomenclature can be considered as indicative and productive of 'styles of thought', and since Orientalism was expressed by Edward Said as a 'style of thought' these motifs are of significance in identifying the phenomenon.

In terms of modes of representation, I shall be identifying themes which reify the idea of the Orient and which posit this idea as being a coherent geographical entity about which it is assumed one can make legitimate generalizations and predictions. What is equally important about these modes of representation is that they juxtapose the Orient against the Occident which is in turn also considered to be a place about which one can make meaningful and unambiguous generalizations. Within this process of juxtaposition perhaps the most important element is the inference of moral and developmental qualities which support the thesis of the superiority of the Occident over the Orient.

The first half of this section will explore the written expression of members of the Anglican mission, while the second half will present the expression of the American Presbyterian missionaries. It is necessary to separate the two because although they

start from similar assumptions as to what constitutes the Orient each mission attributes its own meaning to the nature of perceived difference; and this is a phenomenon which will be explored further in sections two and three of this chapter.

To start with the Anglican mission, some of the first expressions as to the nature of the Orient which can be attributed to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians are to be found in the published writings of the Reverend George Percy Badger. These writings pre-date the establishment of formal mission but are of particular significance because they frame future conceptions of the missionary project. *The Nestorians and their Rituals* is a two volume publication; the first being a narration of Badger's expedition to the Nestorian Patriarch in the mountains of Hakkari, the second being a more scholarly portrayal of the Nestorian Church and its doctrines.<sup>2</sup> Volume one is primarily aimed at an educated reading public with a lay interest in mission but also forms part of the genre of travel writing popular in nineteenth-century Britain and America. As such it is bound to conform to some extent with the expectations of the British reading public in terms of style and tone, but Badger's intention is quite clearly to give as accurate a picture as he can; and in fact he apologises to his readers for his lack of skill in, and thus the absence of, what he calls, "imagery borrowed from fancy"<sup>3</sup> which "endangers the truthfulness of description".<sup>4</sup> The object of his book, however, was, according to Badger, to "rouse in the hearts of British Churchmen a sincere desire to restore the Nestorians to primitive orthodoxy in doctrine, and to full enjoyment of the great privileges of the Gospel"<sup>5</sup> so they might "exert themselves zealously in this charitable work".<sup>6</sup> One can therefore expect to see in his descriptions a tendency to emphasise the perceived inadequacies of the Nestorian Church which might validate the necessity for such a mission.

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<sup>2</sup> Rev. George Percy Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals: with the narrative of a mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842-44 and of a late visit to those countries in 1850: also, researches into the present condition of the Syrian Jacobites, Papal Syrians, and Chaldeans, and an enquiry into the religious tenets of the Yezedees* 2 volumes. (London: Darf, 1987)

<sup>3</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, v.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Badger quite cleverly expresses this point whilst at the same time suggesting that others with greater literary skill than himself can legitimately use such imaginative devices without destroying the reality of the description.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vii-viii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, as was mentioned in chapter two, the Kurdish tribal leader Bedr Khan Beg attempted, in the early 1840s, to create an autonomous fiefdom under his own leadership centered upon the Kurdish region of Buhtan (Bohtan).<sup>7</sup> In his attempt to do this he courted the support of the Kurdish tribal leader of Hakkari, Nur Allah Beg, by assisting him in the suppression of the Nestorian Christians.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently Badger and the American missionary Asahel Grant were accused in the British and American home press of precipitating these events.<sup>9</sup> Badger's account is, as previously stated, thus a work of travel writing, a defence of his own actions, and a call to the Anglican laity in support of a mission to the Nestorian Church.

While Badger speaks of 'Orientals' as a category of humanity, for example he mentions the Oriental mind and Oriental dress and hospitality,<sup>10</sup> the term 'Orient' is not used to refer to their geographical location. Instead 'the East' is his usual form of reference.<sup>11</sup> The term 'East', however, is used to denote a somewhat limited 'Orient' distinct from the far-East of China and India.<sup>12</sup> What makes this somewhat nearer East a coherent entity in his narrative is its relationship with Muslim governance. When referring favourably to this land, Badger tends to use the term Ottoman rule, jurisdiction, or sway.<sup>13</sup> When delivering a more aggressive invective, however, the more frequent descriptive term used is that of a 'Mohammedan' land, and this is a habit which suggests that its usage is deliberately deployed for the rhetorical effect of associating Islam with negative values. Badger speaks of the "the withering influence

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<sup>7</sup> See map in chapter one for the location of Bohtan.

<sup>8</sup> Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 66-68.

<sup>9</sup> Primarily upon the evidence of Austen Henry Layard, the archaeologist of Ninevah. See: Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National movement*, 70-71.

<sup>10</sup> Badger speaks of the Oriental mind (see Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 10) and of Oriental dress as a definable category such that one can speak with authority about it as a consistent quality which applies throughout the Orient (see: Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 34). Also Oriental hospitality is described as a trait belonging to all Orientals as a matter of course (Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 344-5 & 357). He also speaks of Orientals as a kind of cultural super-group with likes and dislikes which apply to all (see for example: Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 300).

<sup>11</sup> In the first 150 pages there are no fewer than 25 reference to 'the East', such as "The previous acquaintance with the East, which this author had acquired during two years residence there, [...] seeming in a measure to qualify him for the undertaking". Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, xiii.

<sup>12</sup> See: Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 143. The far-east is a place to which the Nestorians themselves had proselytised and represents a further Orient with potentially different characteristics.

<sup>13</sup> For instances of the use of the term 'Ottoman rule' see: Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, xx, 262, and 363-5. For instances of the use of the term Ottoman jurisdiction see: *Ibid.*, xi. And for instances of the word sway see: *Ibid.*, xii and 173. I counted 17 references to Ottoman jurisdiction, sway, rule, government, yoke, empire, dynasty, and government.

of Mohammedan despotism”,<sup>14</sup> of a ubiquitous “Mohammedan bigotry and oppression”,<sup>15</sup> and of “the long benighted empire of Mohammedan delusion by whose millions of votaries [he] was surrounded on every side.”<sup>16</sup> The use of this rhetorical device is significant as it not only defines the Orient of the 1840s as oppositional to that other imagined entity, Christendom, but it also frames Islam in the context of negative moral and civilizational characteristics. It is, therefore, a rhetorical drawing of the lines of battle in a spiritual war where the perceived religious failings of Islam are considered by him to be manifestly demonstrated by the injustices and economic ineptitude of the temporal governments of the Muslim world.<sup>17</sup>

A word is necessary at this point as to the use of the word ‘Mohammedan’. Both the Anglican and American Presbyterian missionaries, as will be shown, systematically used this expression throughout the period of analysis to refer to Islam, but its use is not neutral. This is a term potentially offensive to Muslims as it implies that Islam is focused upon Mohammed in the same way that Christianity is focused upon Christ. Furthermore, it reveals a way of looking at Islam as the reflected image of Christianity in which Mohammed is represented as the usurper of Christ at the head of a religion which is perceived to be merely a false version of Christianity. This is a point which Edward Said has remarked upon, noting that “it was assumed – quite incorrectly – that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity.”<sup>18</sup> This relationship can be seen in Badger’s work as he refers to the Prophet Mohammed as the “the arch-imposter”,<sup>19</sup> thus implying that Mohammed represents a religion which is not simply an alternative to Christianity but one which attempts to portray itself as Christianity. This reduces Islam from the status of a competing world religion to that of an inferior and fraudulent copy of Christianity, a kind of heresy, and its use is clearly in line with the expectations of the Orientalist critique.

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<sup>14</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 202.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

<sup>17</sup> For an example of injustice Badger cites how the billeting of troops on the ‘unfortunate subjects’ of the Pasha is representative of the Muslim regime in the early 1840s and that the bill of rights named the ‘Hatti Shereef’ of 1839 (also known as the *Tanzimât Fermânı*) was a mockery and a parody of liberty. See: Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 34. Also he cites arbitrary forced labour as a common tyranny applied by Muslims to non-Muslims, and also that impromptu ‘taxation’ of Christians was an example of the unjust nature of Muslim rule: *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>18</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 17.

So, from the use of expressions such as 'Mohammedan despotism' it can be seen that the Orient of a future Assyrian Mission was represented by Badger as a place of injustice, but what is significant is that the injustice of the government is directly related in this narrative to its Islamic character.<sup>20</sup> As Badger narrates his journey he emphasises the religious character of misgovernment, saying:

The pretty plain in which Mezraa is situated reminded us of some country places in our native land; how different is the condition of the villagers from the husbandmen of happy England! The heart sickens at the contrast, which only those can enter into who have witnessed the baneful effects of a despotic and infidel government.<sup>21</sup>

Ultimately, he expresses his hope that "GOD, in His mercy, will soon break the staff of Mohammedan tyranny and oppression, and free the Nestorians from its baneful slavery."<sup>22</sup> Badger's historical overview adds a didactic perspective to the current state of affairs in the mid-nineteenth century by explaining that the Nestorian Christians flourished "until the dark curse of Mohammedan despotism and tyranny hid from them the sun which enlightened and warmed them, and doomed them to wither and fade almost entirely away."<sup>23</sup> This account of 'Oriental history' achieves two important rhetorical objectives; on the one hand it directly associates the perceived failings of contemporary Oriental civilization with Islam, and on the other it evokes the notion of a distant, and Christian, Oriental 'golden age'.

To clarify my own analytical position here, it is not that I think that Badger is inventing instances of misrule and oppression, but that he is creating a false binary of opposition in which the poverty found in England is inferred to be exceptional to its nature and that found in the Orient is representative. This point of view demands the question - would not the industrial slums of England or the highland clearances of Scotland demonstrate the despotic nature of a Christian British government over its poorer classes? While these acts of callous indifference are not mentioned by

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<sup>20</sup> This is reminiscent of Sir William Muir's portrayal of the Caliphate, which Robert Irwin describes as influential among missionaries to India and which he also emphasises as being only one of many divergent representations of the Orient. Significantly, Irwin's point is that it is the Christian and anti-Muslim stance of Muir's work which defines its character not its conformity to a more homogeneous Orientalist discourse. See: Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Penguin, 2007), 162-3.

<sup>21</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 33.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



Badger, he cannot be unaware of this aspect of his country's own history. The reference to an idealised image of his native land evoked by the 'husbandmen of happy England' implies that such tyrannies as can be found in Britain are exceptional to its character whilst the condition of Ottoman subjects in the 1840s is used to demonstrate the natural outcome of an Islamic government and thus to demonstrate the intrinsic nature of the contemporary Orient. This is a good example of the epistemological double-standard of an Orientalist discursive style, the logic of cause and effect only works in one direction to create an essentialised Islamic Orient and an idealised (exceptional) Occident. What is important to note, however, is that this vision of the Orient is marked out through a binary of opposition which is emphatically religious in its terms and which contrasts a Christian 'West' versus an Islamic 'East'.

The narrative is then given a didactic twist which reaffirms the inferior status of Islam in a Christocentric view of world history. The contemporary plight of the 'Nestorians' is, in this view, not a 'mere' historical fact, their subjection to Islam not simply a question of the naturally changing dynamics of economic and political factors, but is instead the result of their own heresy. The rise of Islam is given the significance of a punishment to the wayward Oriental Churches.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the "present deplorable state"<sup>25</sup> of the Nestorians, explains Badger, is due to God's "judicial chastisement"<sup>26</sup> for their separation from "the Church of Christ".<sup>27</sup> Badger's lesson is delivered to a Christian British (and perhaps American) audience and has two rhetorical functions. In the first place it erases Islam as an active force in history and renders it the tool of a Christian god that looks favourably upon the 'Western' world, thus empowering those who would oppose the forces of Islam through missionary service and support. Secondly, there is also an unpleasant circularity to the argument in respect to the status of the Oriental Christians. It implies that the afflictions of the Oriental

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<sup>24</sup> This is reminiscent of the Biblical notion that the pagan forces of Babylon were caused to rise up as a punishment to the wayward Israelites prior to the Captivity, it is also likely that the similarity is not coincidental. Interestingly Amir Harrak relates that 8<sup>th</sup> century Syriac chroniclers depicted the Arab conquests in just this way, as latter day Assyrians. See: Amir Harrak, "Ah! The Assyrian is the Rod of My Hand!: Syriac view of history after the advent of Islam," *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam*, Eds. J. J. Van Ginkel et al (Leuven; Dudley MA: Peeters, 2005), 45-67. Robert Irwin makes similar observations, see: Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Penguin, 2007), 21, 72, 86 and 100.

<sup>25</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 59-60.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Churches are the just rewards of their heresy, and equally that the heresy of which they are accused is demonstrated by those same afflictions. The overall effect is to present the Muslim dominated Orient as a place of error, which may perhaps be corrected, and to present the Christian Occident as not only powerful but 'right'.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's mission to the Assyrian Church was thus, from its earliest days, framed within the context of a struggle for the spiritual overthrow of the Islamic Orient in a return to a lost 'golden age' of Christian supremacy.<sup>28</sup> There are, therefore, two Orients in Badger's narrative which are separated by time. There is a contemporary and threatening realm of 'Mohammedan tyranny' which is somewhat neutralised in a narrative where Islam is presented as a chastisement of Oriental Christianity. This plays well to the book's target audience of lay Christian supporters of mission, and fits equally well into ideas of the role of Christian Britain as a force in the world for 'good'. Against this is set a lost Oriental golden age of a distant primitive Christian vitality which could be regained by a return to Christian fidelity. The goal of mission, in this view, was thus to enable the Nestorian Christians to reclaim their ancient heritage and in so doing Islam would be vanquished.<sup>29</sup> To put it more figuratively, it is my understanding of this project that the Anglicans saw the Nestorian Church as a kind of 'Trojan-horse' to the otherwise impregnable fortress of 'Mohammedan delusion'.<sup>30</sup> The gift, so to speak, of an educated and 'cleansed' Christian community would, it was hoped, lead to the emergence of a reinvigorated and proselytising 'Oriental Christianity' which would, in time, overthrow Muslim domination but, significantly, this indirect process would retain the integrity of the realm as an 'Oriental' space. As Badger puts it, a significant object in restoring the Old East Syrian Church "to primitive Orthodoxy in doctrine"<sup>31</sup> was to "pave the way for the conversion of the large infidel populations in these regions."<sup>32</sup> This certainly demonstrates Badger's desire for a conquest of the Islamic Orient but only on a

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>30</sup> This is echoed in an 1879 pamphlet entitled "The Spiritual Wants of Asia" produced to raise funds for the mission which states that "It has been prophesied by distinguished men who have had intimate acquaintance with the Nestorian people, that they were destined again to play an important part in the world, that they will become our police and agents in Asia; they are the only Christians of Asia who have "backbone" to fight for their homes." *The Spiritual Wants of Asia, Commended and translated by Presbyter George Hormuzd* (London: Barrett, sons & CO, 1879), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, viii.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

spiritual level and only as part of an imagined divine plan which was beyond the machinations of politicians and other temporal powers. This is a significant distinction because it implies the unacceptability of political imperialism in Badger's view, and this is a subject which will be dealt with fully in chapter four.

This early portrayal of the relationship between a putative Anglican mission and the particular Orient of its focus is echoed by the Reverend Edward Lewes Cutts, who was sent out in 1876 to assess the feasibility of a permanent missionary base.<sup>33</sup> The source texts referred to here are derived from Cutts' account of his journey to the Patriarch of the Nestorians in Kochanes, and which was published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.). As such the work is clearly intended to serve the interests of the Society in generating popular support and donations for its planned mission to the Nestorian Christians, and is aimed at an Anglican ecclesiastical and lay audience. In this respect it would be reasonable to suppose that the tenor of this work of travel writing would be conditioned by popular attitudes about the Orient but would also express something of the Anglican world-view and its ecumenical aspirations.

In this work the Orient is defined predominantly in religious terms, a feature that is emphasised by the title of the book which alludes to the Islamic crescent emblem dominating the Oriental Christians who were forced to live under its influence.<sup>34</sup> As with Badger, Cutts also refers to the 'golden age' of Nestorian past glories which are described by him as being brought to an abrupt end by the "Mohammedan zeal"<sup>35</sup> of Tamerlane who, he states, destroyed their churches and "persecuted them without mercy".<sup>36</sup> It should perhaps, in the interests of balance, be pointed out that in all probability Tamerlane killed more Muslims than Christians, and that conceivably his zeal derived more from a personal desire for power than from some intrinsic Islamic

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<sup>33</sup> He was sent to the Nestorians of Hakkari by a consortium of charitable societies and was given his ecclesiastical authority by the Archbishop of Canterbury. See: Edward Lewes Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1878), 9.

<sup>34</sup> Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia*.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* The Golden Age to which Badger is referring is far from a fictitious idea. According to Francoise Micheau the fifth to eighth centuries saw intense missionary activity which took Christianity in its Nestorian form as far afield as Eastern Iran, Arabia, Central Asia, China, the coast of India, and even Indonesia. Francoise Micheau, "Eastern Christianities (Eleventh to Fourteenth Centuries): Copts, Melkites, Nestorians and Jacobites." *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Volume 5 Eastern Christianity*, edited by Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 378. See also: John Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: the story of a Church on fire (Christianity in the Islamic World)* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1928).

fanaticism.<sup>37</sup> What is important, however, is not the veracity of Cutts' statement but his rhetorical representation of Islam. That Tamerlane's acts should be represented as 'Mohammedan zeal' attributes to Islam an innate fanaticism, by associating it with one of history's more prolific mass-murderers, which in turn implies a duty to the supporters of mission "to prevent the Mohammedans",<sup>38</sup> as a generic type, "from persecuting [the Nestorians] to extinction."<sup>39</sup> In this way Cutts, writing in the 1870s, as with Badger before him, can be seen to demonstrate an Orientalist style of expression in his writing through the representation of an essentialised Orient imbued with an Islamic fanaticism which posits this geographical region in opposition to its more rational counterpart, Christendom.

I have mentioned Badger's attribution of the manifest power of the 'West' over the 'East' as a sign of its moral, cultural, and spiritual superiority, but this portrayal of the relationship between temporal power and the favour of God is perhaps most strongly expressed in the 1880s and 1890s in the letters of Athelstan Riley. John Athelstan Riley, whilst not ordained, was an enthusiastic and influential figure in the foundation of the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission to the Assyrian Christians and is described by J. F. Coakley as its chief publicist in the early days of mission.<sup>40</sup> His organisational energies and forthright opinion have left a significant impression upon the archive and had a formative influence upon the character of the Mission. The bulk of quotations taken from Riley's work used in this thesis derive from his own collection of pamphlets which were aimed at winning over the Anglican laity to the support of this mission. The rhetorical style and tenor of material thus echoes the speeches from which they were largely taken and seems to be intended to rouse his 'listeners' to action, which might explain to some extent the polemical style of his language.

In an address to the supporters of mission in 1887, Riley emphasised the ancient prestige of the Nestorian Church prior to the fourteenth century, reminding his audience that not only was it the largest Christian Communion of its day but that it

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<sup>37</sup> Lapidus states of Amir Timur (Tamerlane) that his "conquests were made in the name of the Shari'a, on the pretext that his enemies were traitors to Islam." Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 229. Thus his main enemies were other Muslims who opposed his usurpation of power.

<sup>38</sup> Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia*, 347.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 3.

outnumbered the whole of the rest of Christendom combined.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, he states, “her schools at Edessa, Baghdad, and Nisibis were noted for their subtle intellects, her missionaries for their zeal”<sup>42</sup> and that “for a time, indeed, it seemed as if [heretical] Nestorianism would vanquish the truth.”<sup>43</sup> Yet from this great height and dignity the Nestorian Church, Riley reveals, was bound to fall due to its foundation upon the heretical tenets of Nestorius.<sup>44</sup> This evaluation of divine providence favouring the faithful with temporal advantage and afflicting the unfaithful with a scourge in the form of ‘Mohammedan oppression’ is identical, if not more explicit, to that of Badger and Cutts. In terms of an Orientalist discourse of power relations it draws upon evident temporal advantage and converts that into a ‘proof’ of moral superiority which, in turn, supports authority over the Orient and lends legitimacy to projects in the region.

Despite the distinction made between the Western Churches and the allegedly heretical Eastern Churches, the more significant division in Riley’s world-view can be seen to be that which exists between an Islamic ‘Orient’ and a ‘Western’ ‘Christendom’. This is at the time when the Ottoman Sultan Abd al Hamid was emphasising the Islamic character of the Ottoman Empire and the Kurdish Hamidiya cavalry were active in the suppression of rebellious Christian autonomy.<sup>45</sup> The Nestorians in this narrative, despite their heretical status, are thus portrayed as something of a tenacious outpost of Christian loyalty amongst the overwhelming onslaught of Islam. Riley thus describes how the Nestorians, persecuted, diminished, and impoverished were driven back to the mountains of Kurdistan, where:

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<sup>41</sup> Athelstan Riley, *The Assyrian Church: A Paper read at the Wolverhampton Church Congress, October 1887*, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.07, 2. Riley cites John Mason Neale, who Coakley describes as “the famous liturgiologist and future founder (in 1864) of the Eastern Churches Association”, as the authority for this information. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 50.

<sup>42</sup> Athelstan Riley, *Report on the Foundation of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Church in 1886* (February, 1887), Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.05C, 3. This sentiment echoes an 1879 pamphlet produced by the mission which states that: ““In the sixth and subsequent centuries, [the Nestorians] flourished greatly, and displaying great missionary zeal, succeeded in establishing Churches from the north of Tartary to Ceylon, from the interior of China to Egypt. They still remember and are proud of this characteristic of their Church, and express their desire to be used in Missionary enterprise in the present day.” *The Assyrian or so-called Nestorian Christians of Kurdistan* (December 16, 1879), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 50.

<sup>43</sup> Riley, *Report on the Foundation of the Archbishop’s Mission*, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Riley, *The Assyrian Church. By Mr. Athelstan Riley. A Paper read at the Wolverhampton Church Congress, October 1887*, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.07, 2.

<sup>45</sup> See: McDowell, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 59-63.

the bold and grand mountain ranges, separated by deep and narrow valleys [formed] the fortresses, so to speak, in which the Assyrians have been enabled to preserve the Christian faith amidst the dominant Mohammedan races.<sup>46</sup>

This imaginative use of geography is rhetorically significant as it establishes the Nestorian Church as embattled, erroneous in doctrine yet resilient in belief; an Oriental haven of Christianity resisting the 'anti-belief' of 'Mohammedanism'. Another interesting aspect of Riley's portrayal of the Nestorian Church is the narrative's inconsistency. On the one hand he emphasises the grandeur and sophistication of the Nestorian Church just prior to the fourteenth century, on the other he portrays the contemporary 'Assyrian' Christians as a survival of a primitive form of Christianity unaltered since the fourth century.<sup>47</sup> Obviously it cannot be both, but a shrewd use of each at strategic points in his narrative has its rhetorical advantages. The latter claim enables the author to portray the Syrians in terms of a timeless Orient, a window to an ancient past and a relic of the primitive origins of the Christian faith. Yet, in a recurrence of what I have described as the 'Trojan-horse' idea, the somewhat contradictory image of the former sophistication and glory of the late thirteenth-century Nestorian Church allows the reader to grasp the possibilities to which this people could be put to work in the fantasy of a future re-Christianising of the Orient.<sup>48</sup>

It can perhaps be said that the formal commencement of the Anglican mission started with the arrival in Urmia of the missionaries Maclean and Browne in August of 1886.<sup>49</sup> The Reverend Arthur John Maclean, as with the previous characters described above, presents the Orient as economically and morally bankrupt due to Muslim governance, and thus as a geographical region which is defined by Islam. The Rev. Maclean, a graduate of Trinity College Cambridge, was recruited by Athelstan Riley to open the Assyrian Mission in 1886 on a more permanent basis than had hitherto been attempted. In more sober terms than Riley he described the

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<sup>46</sup> Riley, *Report on the Foundation of the Archbishop's Mission*, 374.

<sup>47</sup> Riley, *The Assyrian Church*, G3200 3.07, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Despite the fact that the form of Christianity which flourished and proselytised in the latter period was the form which sanctified Nestorius and propagated the formulations which the Anglicans so desperately wanted to 'cleanse' from the contemporary Syrian Church.

<sup>49</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians had been started on a permanent basis with a single and rather eccentric missionary, Rudolph Wahl, who had been active in Ottoman Kurdistan since 1881. However, it was not until the arrival of Maclean and Browne that the mission started in earnest. See: Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 79-80 and 103-108.

Nestorians, after decades of Ottoman reform since the Hatti Shereef of 1839 and the massacres of 1843, as still having a difficult existence being “surrounded by a race, the Kurds, whose enmity for them [was] implacable.”<sup>50</sup> He continues:

It will be remembered how, more than forty years ago, under Bedr Khan Beg, the Kurdish chieftain of Bohtan, they fell on the unoffending Christians and massacred them, men, women, and children; and, though such a massacre is now, one may hope, impossible, yet the hatred of the Kurds for the Christians remains the same as before. The great massacre led to Kurdistan becoming, in fact as well as in name a Turkish province, and the Turks prevent wholesale massacres such as those of Bedr Khan Beg. Still, Christians are frequently murdered and robbed by the Kurds, even now. Besides this, they have to pay most exorbitant taxes, and have no remedy against the rapacity of local officials.<sup>51</sup>

The above statement comes from a report written by Maclean to the Archbishop and subsequently published as part of a pamphlet which was circulated to both assure supporters of the progress of the mission and equally to elicit further support. The majority of the material used in this thesis for Maclean comes from similar pamphlets or the letters written to the Archbishop from which the pamphlets were derived. Maclean’s narrative is far more measured than that of Riley, perhaps because it is a practical report rather than an impassioned speech, but it does, nonetheless, draw attention to the perceived enmity which was felt towards the Christians by a Muslim ‘race’, the Kurds, and the unequal status of the former in a Muslim polity. Maclean also shared the generally expressed Anglican hope that the Nestorians would prove to be the vehicle by which an Islamic Orient would be transformed into a Christian Orient through the rekindling of the Nestorian community’s missionary spirit. Maclean thus writes of the Nestorians that:

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<sup>50</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Report from Urmi* (8<sup>th</sup> February, 1888), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 270. The Hatti Shereef or Tanzimât Fermânı is a decree of 1839 proposing sweeping reforms and modernisation within the Ottoman Empire upon European lines.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 270-1.

They are a people well worth helping, and it seems as though the time would come when *they* and the other Oriental Christians, will be the means of converting the Mohammedan world to Christianity.<sup>52</sup>

It can be seen that Maclean's narrative describes the Orient in reference to a stereotypical Christian-Muslim binary. What is interesting, however, is how one has to look considerably harder to find instances of a clearly Orientalist style in the written expression of Maclean than one does in the letters and published works of the missionaries cited above. This points to a diversity of expression which existed within the corpus of the textual output of the Anglican missionaries, and it highlights the individual nature of their knowledge production. It was initially my thought that as time progressed attitudes were becoming more moderated and less Orientalist in their representation within the archive. However, some thirty years later the same vision of the Orient, as a realm defined by Islamic domination, was still very much evident in the written expression of missionaries such as William Ainger Wigram. In fact Wigram's Orientalism in the early years of the twentieth century seems to be as entrenched as that of Riley in the 1880s, and so a softening of attitudes cannot be said to have occurred. Instead an individual variance of expression can be seen at any one point amongst the individual missionaries, and this is a feature which disrupts the notion of conformity within an Orientalist discourse. What had changed, however, was that a greater emphasis was now being placed upon the concept of race.

Wigram was both a missionary and a respected academic, serving as head of the Anglican mission between 1902 and 1912 and becoming an influential expert on the 'Assyrian' Church after his retirement from mission and so his personal contribution to the mission's ethos is of particular importance. The most significant sources used here for Wigram's representation of the Orient derive from two of his published works. The first, and most significant for his portrayal of the nature of the Orient and its relationship to the Occident, is his *Cradle of Mankind* which is a work of travel writing designed for a popular audience and co-authored with his brother Edgar. The preface to the first edition states that "it takes two people at least to write a book of travel; a newcomer to give the first impressions and an old resident to reveal the true

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 271.



inwardness of things.”<sup>53</sup> It is this ‘inwardness’ which is the possession of the Orientalist knowledgeable about the ‘true’ nature of the Orient which William supplies. The second work, *An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church*, is a more scholarly endeavour which attempts to map out the doctrines and theology of the Assyrian Church within the rubric of the Anglican Church’s ecumenical mission to bridge the gap separating the two Churches.<sup>54</sup> This work is obviously targeted at a more scholarly audience but nonetheless is written within the context of the objectives of the Anglican mission which sought to assist a ‘fallen’ Church to reclaim its former glory.

Within both of these narratives it is interesting to note how Wigram refers to the Orient as an object of knowledge which is both familiar and ‘understood’ to the reader without his ever truly defining the boundaries of this entity.<sup>55</sup> He typically refers simply to ‘the East’, where the ‘East’ is a place with regular and predictable qualities which apply to its totality and which are essentially opposed to those of ‘the West’.<sup>56</sup> In this respect his representative style is typically Orientalist, in the sense of a polemical narrative, and in his *Cradle of Mankind* his representation is made more vivid by his referring to the Orient as if it were a creature with a collective mind. The ‘East’ is depicted as a brooding presence which “waits unconscious”,<sup>57</sup> explains Wigram, taking “no thought for the morrow. The shadow of coming events is perceived indeed, but not understood.”<sup>58</sup> These events were the expected overwhelming arrival of a superior ‘Western’ cultural influence throughout the twentieth century and the transformative power of ‘Western’ ideas of organisation and technology upon an uncomprehending Orient.

This image of a timeless Orient, which is represented as being dragged into the twentieth century by the forceful prowess of Occidental intelligence and vigor,

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<sup>53</sup> William A. Wigram and Edgar T. A. Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind: life in Eastern Kurdistan* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1914), vii.

<sup>54</sup> Wigram, William A. *An introduction to the history of the Assyrian Church or the church of the Sassanid Persian Empire*, 100-640. London: S.P.C.K., 1910.

<sup>55</sup> It is in effect a ‘common sense’ notion. But if we take seriously Morton Fried’s critique of common sense as being cultural values so deeply absorbed by the individual as to be beyond the rigors of intellectual scrutiny, then we are confronted by something approximating a discourse in the Foucauldian sense. See: Morton H. Fried, *The Notion of Tribe*, (Menlo Park, CA: Cummings, 1975), 12.

<sup>56</sup> This is also very explicit in the work of Cutts, who simply states that “In the East things are the opposite to things in the West”. Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia*, 59.

<sup>57</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

evokes the characteristic 'otherness' of Orientalist description yet the internal homogeneity of the Orient seems to be somewhat disrupted by its sub-division in this narrative into racial categories. So, Wigram's Orient is paradoxically both homogeneous and differentiated at the same time depending upon how he decides to talk about the region, he can refer to it either in racial terms or in a more general manner in terms of a shared Oriental ontology. Wigram speaks of an Asia in which Orientals correspond to one or other racial group derived from their religious affiliation. Thus, for example, he speaks of the Assyrians and Armenians as races and, more generally, he also speaks of the Islamic and Christian races.<sup>59</sup> In these instances Wigram is often referring to non-Muslim communities under the *millet* system but his form of reference frequently conflates religious affiliation with race.<sup>60</sup> So, the notion of the *millet* as a socio-religious grouping based upon a choice of religion (albeit within the limited context of the socio-economic confines of circumstance) is presented as a racial ontology associated with the concept of the nation as a primordial entity.<sup>61</sup>

In this scheme the allegedly more intelligent Christian 'nations' are oppressed by the brute force of less intelligent but more belligerent Muslim 'races'.<sup>62</sup> Thus the Orient continues to be defined by the domination of Islam but the constituent parts of that entity are given a 'modern' and pseudo-scientific presentation as 'races' which can trace their lineage back to antiquity and beyond.<sup>63</sup> This disruption of the homogeneity of the Orient in Wigram's narrative is intensified by the implication that the Christian communities of the 'East' are in some racial sense more akin to the Occident,

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<sup>59</sup> For the Assyrians as a race see: Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 281. For the Armenians as a race see: *Ibid.*, 244. For the Islamic and Christian races see: *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>60</sup> The millet system was a method of governance used by the Ottomans whereby non-Muslim religious communities enjoyed a limited degree of autonomy within the Muslim polity, with differing rights and responsibilities to those of Muslims. See: Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 265. Also see Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 174-9.

<sup>61</sup> In reference to this phenomenon Donald Quataert points out that the racial and national disputes which fragmented the Ottoman Empire throughout the nineteenth century were neither ancient nor inevitable but were instead the result of changing patterns of identity formation associated with Ottoman reform and 'Great Power' influence. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 174-92. For the concept of 'Primordialism' in relation to nationalism see: Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: theory, ideology, history* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).

<sup>62</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 130-1.

<sup>63</sup> This view seems to follow in the footsteps of Arthur de Gobineau's *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*. As Bernasconi points out works which followed on from Gobineau and attempted to integrate the biological work of Darwin into theories of social hierarchy gained great acceptance throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott, eds., *The Idea of Race*, Readings in Philosophy series (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2000), xi.

through their intelligence, than are the Muslim communities. This situation is characterised by Wigram in a phenomenon which he calls the “hermit crab act”<sup>64</sup> where tribal Kurds are described as progressively occupying and despoiling productive Syrian villages whilst slowly ejecting the former occupants.<sup>65</sup> This characterisation is used to demonstrate that the Muslim Kurds are incapable of productivity and thus live parasitically off the industrious Syrian Christians. “If ever one sees a Kurdish village which has good fields, and signs of good cultivation,”<sup>66</sup> Wigram relates, “one can be sure that it was originally Christian”.<sup>67</sup>

It would thus seem that there are, according to this narrative, differing degrees of Oriental nature which are associated with religious communities that are described in racial terms, and in which Oriental Christians would appear to be less Oriental than Muslims. This presents a distinct complication to an Orientalist discourse in which Orientals are represented as a platonic essence as Said seems to be suggesting when he speaks of that “long-developing core of essential knowledge, knowledge both academic and practical, which Cromer and Balfour inherited from a century of modern Western Orientalism”<sup>68</sup> in which Orientals “for all practical purposes were a Platonic essence”.<sup>69</sup> But it should also be remembered that Said argued that “there was (and is) a linguistic Orient, a Freudian Orient, a Spenglerian Orient, a Darwinian Orient, a racist Orient – and so on”;<sup>70</sup> and that this suggests a far more nuanced discursive formation comprised of competing styles of representing the Oriental ‘other’.

Wigram’s treatment of the regime of the Ottoman Empire is equally racial in its outlook.<sup>71</sup> The ‘Turk’ is referred to in a generalising singular, indicating the perceived

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<sup>64</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 177.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-8. This is also mentioned by Riley, see: Riley, *Report on the foundation of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Church in 1886*, AM-2, 375.

<sup>66</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 178.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 38.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>71</sup> This is, of course, a style of description common to contemporary British commentators on the Ottoman Empire, such as Major E. B. Soane for example. It is, in fact, common to colonial discourse of the nineteenth century almost to the point of ubiquity. Elleke Bohemer states that “It is safe to say that few nineteenth-century colonial discourses would not have borne the imprint of a race vocabulary and racial ideas. Symbols of blood, race purity and taint, of kind calling to kind, and the lapse back ‘into the native’ were stacked up high in Victorian perceptions. Many of Kipling’s stories, certainly, are preoccupied by race.” Elleke Bohemer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 83. It is, however, also common

uniformity of traits and characteristics across a wide group of people connected by the inference of race. The 'Turk' is thus accused of lacking in intelligence when compared to the 'Armenian' who is 'his' superior in this quality but who is 'his' inferior in marital prowess.<sup>72</sup> In this battle between what Wigram sees as the intelligent Christian races and the belligerent Muslim Turk he concludes that political reform and religious equality "is anathema to the Turk, for he knows (even if he cannot put the matter into words) that reform means subjection of the Turk [...] for the reason that the races are not equal."<sup>73</sup> This is a definitively Orientalist representation of the ontological Turk which fits perfectly into the model outlined in chapter one of this thesis, but where does it leave the Armenian? In speaking of the 'Turk', Wigram, using a style of representation identifiable as *exteriority*, speaks to a 'Western' audience as the interpreter of an irrational people whose racial inferiority requires their recourse to violence and thus implies their moral inferiority. The sub-text of this piece is the implication that Muslim hegemony defies ideas of reform and in turn justifies attempts to enable Oriental Christians to take their 'rightful' place as rulers. This solution is immediately neutralised, however, by Wigram's lack of faith in present-day Oriental Christians. He cautions that:

it is not at all improbable that centuries of subjection have left the Christians in Turkey constitutionally unfit for positions of authority: that for all their superior intelligence, they are at present as incapable of governing Turks and Kurds and Arabs as the Bengali Babus are of governing Pathans and Sikhs.<sup>74</sup>

The reference to India is fascinating as it ties Orientalist ideas of superiority to imperialistic notions of governance by superior Occidentals over inferior Orientals, but here I am getting ahead of myself and this subject will be dealt with in detail in chapter four. What is significant in relation to Orientalism as a style of representation is that the racial presentation of the Oriental in this narrative is strongly reminiscent of earlier representations of the Orient as a religiously defined space. It can be

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to contemporary descriptions of other European nations, such as the Gallic temperament of the French or the martial nature of the Germans and perhaps we should not draw too many conclusions about a specific East/West encounter.

<sup>72</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 36.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 244. Round brackets in original.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

observed that the races criticised for their lack of intelligence and morality are the Muslim 'races' and the intellectually more able races are always Christian. One might expect this to blur the distinction between Orient and Occident but the Oriental Christians are, nonetheless, still represented as Orientals. There is an easy and generalising logic to this narrative in which Turks are clearly unlike "us" for they lack "our" intelligence and while Oriental Christians share "our" intelligence they lack "our" vitality. The significance of this position would seem to be that 'as Orientals' none of these races possess all of the attributes which in combination define the Occidental, and as such the narrative succeeds most fully in maintaining the distinction between 'East' and 'West' and in expounding the perceived superiority of the Occidental as complete individual. This complex representation of Orientals does not, however, seem to demonstrate that the Orientalist discourse dictates what can and cannot be said about the Orient, but instead seems to suggest that a more pragmatic use of differing ways of talking about the 'other' are selected from diverse sources to suit the desired effect required by the narrator.

It can be seen from the above that throughout the course of the Anglican mission a consistent Orientalist style in terms of the representation of the Orient as a realm in opposition to the Occident can be detected. The expression of this Orientalism is variable, however, with a greater emphasis being placed upon race towards the end of the nineteenth century and with individual missionaries such as Maclean in the middle of the period of analysis demonstrating a somewhat muted Orientalism. It should perhaps be added that I could find no instances where Maclean rejected the Orientalist articulations of other missionaries, and this is itself perhaps significant in demonstrating the accepted authority of the Orientalist discourse as hegemonic. These Anglican missionary narratives, which portray Islam as the cause of Oriental decline, risk disrupting the homogeneity of the Orient (which is made up of both Muslim and non-Muslim communities) but this is to some extent neutralised by the presentation of Oriental Christians as nonetheless 'other' (in ways which sometimes vary from the portrayal of Muslims) to the Christians of the 'West'. This complicates the narrative but does not eliminate the sense of unalterable 'otherness' seen to exist between these two 'essentially' geographical entities.

Turning attention from the Anglican missionaries I will now present an analysis of those representations of the Orient which can be found in the knowledge production of the American Presbyterian missionaries of the West Persia Mission. The bulk of sources for this analysis are derived from the archive of the PCUSA and take the form of letters written (usually on a monthly basis) by the missionaries in the field to the Secretary of the Board of Commissioners. The tone of these letters is always very familial and usually reads as would a letter written to relatives, nonetheless the purpose of the letters was to inform and request assistance from the Board. These two controlling principles mean that these letters always seek to depict the conditions of the mission within the frame of the mission's objectives and frequently become involved in arguments centered upon the role of the mission in relation to the needs of its ostensible targets. It should also be borne in mind that a certain level of self-censorship by the missionaries is likely to have occurred as they knew that their letters may well be used for the purposes of promoting the mission to a larger audience of lay supporters 'back home'.

As with the Anglicans, the American missionaries can be seen to represent the lands that comprised their mission-field as a geographical space defined by the domination of Islam. Justin Perkins, an early pioneer of mission, in 1868 writes of the mission field as benighted by "the midnight ages of Mohammedan oppression".<sup>75</sup> As with the Anglicans, the American missionaries also put to use the same pejorative nomenclature which implied that Islam was a mere falsification of Christianity. The derogatory term 'Mohammedan' is frequently deployed throughout their writings and epithets such as 'imposter religion' and 'false-prophet' are also used.<sup>76</sup> The overall effect of such terms is to frame the Orient as a land of aberration, and Islam as a foolish or perverse reaction to Christianity rather than a legitimate expression of faith in its own right.

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<sup>75</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 61.

<sup>76</sup> For example see: Samuel Graham Wilson, *letter January 31, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 128. J. N. Wright, *letter March 28, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter. 101. Miss. L. B. Beaver, *letter August 20, 1901*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.273. Index, Vol. 196, Letter. 3. William Ambrose Shedd, *letter March 2, 1901*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.273. Index, Vol. 196, Letter. 3. Miss Lenore Schoebel, *Personal Report 1913-14. Urumia Station*, Folder 6, box 4, RG-91, PCUSA, Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II, Subseries 2. Robert McEwan Labaree, *Report of Evangelistic Work – Urumia Station. 1910-1911*, Folder 19, box 4, RG-91, PCUSA, CEMR, Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II, Subseries 3.

The Orient was therefore a region in which, as John Joseph notes, Eli Smith figuratively suggested after his exploratory mission of 1829, that a spiritual 'fire' should be lit to "shine upon the corruption of the Persian on the one side, and upon the barbarities of the Kurd on the other".<sup>77</sup> Generalisations such as corrupt Persians and barbaric Kurds are stock images of Orientalist expression and are often deployed by the American missionaries as common-sense knowledge. Later, missionaries such as Benjamin Labaree, who served at the Urumia mission station between 1860 and 1903, refers to Persia in 1880 as a "land of Moslem fanaticism and misrule."<sup>78</sup> Joseph Gallup Cochran (served 1847-71), writing in 1871, also expresses the same anti-Muslim sentiments and, as with Justin Perkins, invokes the imagery of light and dark to distinguish the 'Mohammedan' realm from the Christian 'West' when he describes the region as "these dark Mohammedan lands".<sup>79</sup> This sets up the relationship between 'East' and 'West' as a dialectic between Islam and Christianity, in a battle between darkness and light. In this vein Joseph Plumb Cochran (served 1878-1905), writing in 1898, depicts the West Persia Mission as "battling against the powers of darkness that have been arrayed against [the] mission."<sup>80</sup> The motif of light versus dark is not in itself an Orientalist image, and it is true that darkness could be posited against any opposition to mission, but when used in conjunction with the portrayal of the Orient as an Islamic space it combines to give the missionary effort a more focused context in a more general encounter between good and evil. What is perhaps most important is that this rhetorical style, which appears in the missionaries letters and reports throughout the period of analysis, leaves very little room for compromise and reconciliation with other expressions of faith.

The letters of Benjamin Labaree during the 1870s and 1880s present a particularly good example of the use of this rhetorical device of positing darkness and light to the

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<sup>77</sup> Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East*, 68.

<sup>78</sup> Benjamin Labaree jnr., *letter July 8, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 64. Also see John Newton Wright who speaks of the overflowing of Kurdish insurrection and plunder in 1896 from Ottoman Kurdistan into Persia as "just the fanaticism of Turkey which is spreading over the border into Persia. The Jews, too, of Salmas are in much trouble from the Moslems' fanatical spirit." John Newton Wright, *letter March 30, 1896*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.126. Index, Vol. 12, Letter 163.

<sup>79</sup> Joseph Gallup Cochran, *letter April 12, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter. 21.

<sup>80</sup> Joseph Plumb Cochran, from a speech delivered in Urumia in 1898 and quoted from Robert E. Speer, *"The Hakim Sahib" The Foreign Doctor: a biography of Joseph Plumb Cochran M.D. of Persia* (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company), 23-4. Joseph Plumb Cochran, the son of Joseph Gallup Cochran, was born in Seir in 1855 and served the greater part of his life on the West Persia mission until his death in 1905.

character of the mission and its enemies. However, it is not only Islam which is seen by him to be a force of darkness and he broadens his criticism to include the votaries of 'Oriental' Christianity. In one instance he remarks upon a particularly obdurate Syrian Christian as being "one who has actively withstood the light"<sup>81</sup> and elsewhere he refers to Maragha as "that remotely hitherto religious city, dwelling in the debasing atmosphere of Mohammedanism and in the gloom of a dead Christianity".<sup>82</sup> The narrative suggests that all of the religions of the 'East' are presumed dark and dead and thus associated with evil and corruption, and consequently he advocates that these 'dead' religious forms must be replaced.<sup>83</sup>

An important distinction has to be made, however, between this style of religious rhetoric and a more general polemicisation of the Orient. The division of the world between the forces of light and darkness does not logically posit light to the entirety of the Occidental world, for obviously the American Presbyterians would not consider the Roman Catholic Church, for example, as an agent of the light. However, and rather paradoxically, these missionary narrative do expound a providential explanation to the success of the predominantly Christian nations of the 'West' taken as a whole. The Occident in these American narratives is presented as a more broadly conceived Christian realm where civilization holds sway by the Grace of God, the Orient, by contrast, is a Godless realm from which the bounties of civilization are *by consequence* withheld. The providential picture of the world as divided between the favoured and the unfaithful is most graphically illustrated by Miss Mary Jewett, an unmarried missionary who served in Urumia and Tabriz from 1871 to 1907.<sup>84</sup>

In Miss Jewett's first letter to the Board of Commissioners in November 1871 she concurs with the advice given to her by fellow missionary John Haskell Shedd that as she travelled eastwards by degrees she would be leaving civilization behind, and that as she continued her journey towards Persia she would be "continually taking

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<sup>81</sup> Benjamin Labaree, Jnr., *letter July 8, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 64.

<sup>82</sup> Benjamin Labaree, Jnr., *letter September 12, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter. 48.

<sup>83</sup> It should be noted that this sentiment is most noticeable after the death of Justin Perkins (1869), who had attempted to work within the existing ecclesiastical institutions of the Oriental Churches, and with the transfer of the mission from Congregationalist and into Presbyterian control in 1871.

<sup>84</sup> Miss Mary Jewett, born May 30 1843, served in Urumia and Tabriz from 1871 to 1907 and was actively involved in the proselytisation of local Christians, Moslems (including heterodox Bâbees), Jews, and the 'Ali Allahees'.



steps downward.”<sup>85</sup> What is interesting in this description of her travels is that civilization, which is most notably evident in America and Europe diminishes gradually as one travels east. There is clearly an Orientalist element to this imagery but the gradual change from Occident to Orient, from civilization to barbarity, is interesting as it presents the Orient as something which emanates outwards towards, and in opposition to, the civilized world rather than being more geographically fixed. Miss Jewett’s representation of the superiority of her own country is uncompromising but it is significant that she does not consider this to be due to the innate qualities of ‘Westerners’ but instead to the condition of circumstance. The specific circumstances to which Miss Jewett alludes are constituted by education and the possession of what she considers to be a ‘true’ understanding of religion. “I am thankful”,<sup>86</sup> she writes, “that my country is a nobler, more elevated one, yet I do truly realize that it is only by the grace of God that I and all my people are not sunk as low in the depths of degradation, ignorance and evil as any nation of the earth.”<sup>87</sup> In her estimation the United States of America is a God-blessed land, and her evaluation of the land to which she has been sent says more about the perceived qualities of her own culture than it does about the Orient she is ostensibly describing.<sup>88</sup> In this sense her narrative seems to be primarily a process which reinforces her self-identity and which demonstrates this conviction to the Board of Commissioners.<sup>89</sup> To this end she states that:

The aspect of the country strikes me as being full of resources, a country which with a liberal government, a true Christianity and a free enterprising people would become nearly equal to any anywhere.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Mary Jewett, *letter November 1, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter 53. There seems to have been a convention within the West Persia Mission that upon arrival, within the first month or so, a new missionary should write a letter to the Board of Commissioners describing their first impressions. The descriptive image used by Jewett can also be seen some thirty years later in the letters of Louise Wilbur to describe traveling to Persia via Russia, and was perhaps a standard form of expression. Wilbur writes that “someone said that going to Persia is like going into a deep well. Each step nearer takes you father down in the scale of civilization.” Louise Wilbur, *To Persia to Teach, collected letters of Louise Wilbur 1899-1900*, Archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Papers, Archives SPP 19, page. 100.

<sup>86</sup> Jewett, *letter November 1, 1871*.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Perhaps it is more realistic to say that this style of describing the ‘other’ by reference to oneself and one’s own culture is a natural part of any process of ‘othering’ and not unique to Orientalism.

<sup>89</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Jewett, *letter November 1, 1871*.

This statement is a radical departure from the Anglican mode of representing the Orient as unalterably 'other' to the Occident, and suggests that the Orient can be assisted to become like the Occident. It is a statement, however, which also gives an evaluation of the meaning of Oriental poverty and thus by stating what the Orient lacks she lists the perceived strengths of an idealised American society; simultaneously expounding the remedy for Oriental 'backwardness' and the virtues of Christian America. Jewett's solution, and this is I think at the heart of the American Presbyterian ethos, is that the Orient should strive to be more like her idealised version of America. She continues her description by expressing her hope that if the people of the plains of Persia and the mountains of Kurdistan can be brought to heed the Gospel message, then God would open up the material benefits of an industrial civilization to Persia as those benefits have already been opened up to America.

I doubt not that when there is heed, God in his wonderful providence will open a way in which the hidden treasures will be discovered and made use of, when the mountains shall yield their stores of minerals and the valleys shall become homes of comfort and plenty.<sup>91</sup>

This is a fascinating commentary on the perceived correlation between religious obedience and divine providence, between the emergence of an industrial civilization and the favour of God. It can be seen, too, as a rather patronising yet generous hope that the manifest destiny of America could be shared with the 'Oriental'. According to this narrative, the countries of Europe and America are powerful because they are faithful Christian nations and the remedy for the underdevelopment of the Orient is the adoption of a Protestant belief in God and an 'American' approach to civic responsibility.<sup>92</sup> It can also be noted that there is a correlation between a religious mission and the propagation of American civic values, but what is of significance is that they are not presented as separate values but as one homogeneous way of life; and importantly it is presented as a religious or moral life and not as a political manifesto.

The American Presbyterian hope of 'raising-up' the Orient from its baser nature did not, however, embrace the utility of Oriental religions, and in particular there was no

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> It should be noted, however, that this is a very particular notion of what it is to be American and represents just one imagining of American identity.

room for Islam. Thus a significant device deployed by the American missionaries to contain the concept of Islam as a legitimate and threatening alternative was its polemicisation, through the assertion of general characteristics from instances of the specific. As Edward Said has put it, the Orientalist writers sought “to make out of every observable detail a generalization and out of every generalization an immutable law about the Oriental nature, temperament, mentality, custom, or type”.<sup>93</sup> Thus by selectively pointing out a particularly reprehensible individual or event and proclaiming it to be representative of Islam a polemicised vision of the religion gains currency. This can perhaps best be seen in the narrative of Joseph Plumb Cochran who, writing at the turn of the century, takes up the theme of Islam as the cause of injustice and backwardness and relates the story of a man of no morals who mutilated his wives and robbed his widowed neighbour with impunity. Dr Cochran concludes that this gruesome tale “is one of many illustrations of the terrible life led by most under the Mohammedan religion”.<sup>94</sup> The point is poorly argued by Cochran, however, and it is unclear whether such a psychopath as described in the tale could have got away equally freely with such atrocities in Christian America. The importance of the narrative, however, is that it relies upon just such an assumption, that it could never happen in Christian America, to make its case from the particular to the general assertion that Islam, rather than the individual, is the cause of injustice in the Orient.

Once again, a word of clarification with regard to my analysis is necessary here. I am not claiming that Cochran is inventing this story, nor that cultural values which suppress the rights of women do not exist. The point I am making is about the creation of a binary of Occidental exceptionalism whilst Orientalising the Islamic world. Cochran makes the point that the story is representative of Islam and the implication is that there is no such gender inequality in Christianity, or if there is it is exceptional in its nature. It hardly needs to be stated that patriarchal values within the Christian world have contributed to enormous injustices against women and continue to do so. My critique therefore does not seek to present the Orient or Islam as utopian or to suggest that Cochran’s witnessing of events is inaccurate, but rather it is to point out a rhetorical device which makes from the particular instance a more

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<sup>93</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 86.

<sup>94</sup> Joseph Plumb Cochran, *letter February 21, 1901*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.273. Index, Vol. 196, Letter. 11.

general assertion which supports an ideological view of the world, and to state that this rhetorical device conforms to Edward Said's comments about Orientalism polemicising the Orient. Cochran is using a rhetorical style which polemicises Islam by assuming the representative nature of his anecdote to support a binary world-view of Christendom versus the Mohammedan realm. This is wholly consonant with the representations of American history which Ussama Makdisi and Michael Oren have described, where the genocidal colonisation of the American continent is considered exceptional to a Christian character but the despotism of Muslim governance was considered representative of the failure of Islam.<sup>95</sup>

Another example of this rhetorical style which posits an anecdote as representative of a universal Islamic nature is presented by Benjamin Labaree. Speaking of the terrible famine which swept the country in 1880 just prior to the Ubayd Allah rebellion, Labaree makes a moral point from his observations. He describes how the proselyte communities had shown kindness and charity to all whilst the Muslim community had shown its manifest self-interest by hoarding food and profiteering. He describes the conduct of the Muslims of Urumia as an example of the "dreadful callousness [...] of the Mohammedans to the suffering of their own religion, in spite of the exalted place given to charity by the Koran".<sup>96</sup> Once again it can be seen that this callousness is depicted as representative of the nature of Islam which he goes on to denounce as a false religion.<sup>97</sup>

A particularly unequivocal example of this world-view which presents the 'backwardness' and perceived moral laxity of the Orient as being due to the failure of Islam to provide the necessary structure for the moral welfare of the 'Oriental' can be found in a report by William Ambrose Shedd. The annual reports were usually compiled by the most senior member at a particular mission station and take a narrative form which is very 'story like' in its structure. These reports are consequently easy to read and simultaneously packed with personal subjectivity and opinion. Subsequent to the outbreak of the First World War Shedd describes the breakdown of law and order in the local region as a direct consequence of Islam's

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<sup>95</sup> See: Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 67-8 and 178-9.

<sup>96</sup> Benjamin Labaree, Jr., *letter February 4, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 30.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* Labaree quotes the scriptural line "by their fruits shall ye know them" and points out that those who had been active in distributing alms to the poor were those Nestorians, their converts, who had been touched by the grace of Gospel Light. See: *Ibid.*

failure to inculcate morality among its adherents. Shedd writes of this state of lawlessness that:

The anarchy was the breaking out of the forces of evil that were in every village and almost every home, which transformed an apparently quiet community into a body of looters with no power to restrain rape and murder. Islam condemns these things, but its condemnation is made futile by the fanaticism and hatred whose seeds are in the Koran. We heard the cry of jihad and we saw that it sanctioned the worst passions without arousing any real religious zeal. The utter inability of Moslems to oppose evil and to decide for right in the face of difficulty and infatuation for empty professions showed the moral failure of Islam as much as the outrages committed. Only Christ can save, and the only way to bring Christ to the Moslems is by evangelization.<sup>98</sup>

Clearly this statement is tragically ironic coming as it does on the eve of the slaughter of Christians by Christians that occurred throughout the First World War. Shedd's comments are, nonetheless, an emphatic call to proselytisation as a response to the failure of Islam to provide the necessary environment for the development of human morality, but more than this it also implies that Oriental forms of Christianity are equally incapable of inculcating morality.<sup>99</sup>

It is worth noting that although the American missionaries saw religion as the key factor in determining the intrinsic moral qualities of all humanity they were rather paradoxically, nonetheless, able to see the good in some individuals who had not, in their parlance, been 'touched by the Gospel Light'. This broadmindedness is evidenced in Edmund Wilson McDowell's account of his missionary work among the Kurds. The Rev. McDowell, who served on the West Persia mission between 1887 and the late 1920s, made frequent journeys into the mountains of Kurdistan across the Ottoman border during which he wrote regular comment as to the nature of the

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<sup>98</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *W. A. Shedd. Personal Report: Urumia 1914-15*. RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968. Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 2: Personal Reports, 1911-1930. Box 4. Folder 6. Shedd is also implying that education alone is not enough.

<sup>99</sup> Oriental forms of Christianity are thus seen as dead religions, as Labaree had put it, which lack the Light of the Gospel message.

people he encountered. His commentary is interesting in that it departs from the narrative of the 'good' but persecuted Christian versus the 'bad' and predatory Muslim Kurd which had achieved good currency in the home press of both America and Britain since the Bedr Khan massacres. For example in 1899, he reports on the belligerence of the Nestorian Christians of Tiari who, he states, "frequently make unprovoked attacks upon the Koords",<sup>100</sup> and that in one incident they had preyed upon a "very powerful Sheikh, a man noted for his justice & peaceful disposition".<sup>101</sup> Not only does this present individual 'Orientals' as capable of escaping the confines of their supposed racial character, but it also suggest that this can happen to some extent without evangelisation. Nor was it necessarily true that 'Oriental' Christians would conduct themselves any better than Muslims. I should add, however, that McDowell did not present these positive qualities as representative of the Orient or of Islam. His mandate remained, as one might expect from an American Presbyterian missionary, to recreate the Orient in the image of an idealised America through the propagation of his Presbyterian beliefs and the more civic ideals of liberty and individual accountability which were inexorably linked to his religious identity.

Despite examples such as that of McDowell above which saw the good qualities of non-Christians, a prevalent theme in the letters of the American missionaries was, nonetheless, the representation of the Orient as a realm defined by religious understanding and one thus shaped by the concomitant displeasure of God. A report written by the Reverend Eli T. Allen provides a good example of this style of representation in which the Orient is a realm apart from the Occident due to the religious path down which its respective peoples have walked. The Rev. Allen served at the Urumia mission station between 1891 and 1923 and like McDowell travelled extensively in the Kurdish mountains to the West of the Persian plains.<sup>102</sup> After each of his expeditions Allen, like all other missionaries engaged to make expeditions beyond the usual remit of the mission stations, was required to file a report of his activities and findings. In this report of 1913 can be seen a real concern for the salvation of the Kurds as well as for that of the Christian communities, but this

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<sup>100</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *letter March 2, 1899*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6 (letters out of place - Mountain Work), Letter 217.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> With a break between 1897 and 1911 during which he trained in modern industrial practices for his return to the West Persia mission.

concern is moderated by a cultural arrogance. The report, entitled *A Journey to Sulduz and Ushnook*, contains a story of his encounter with a Kurdish tribal community and though rather lengthy it deserves quoting in full for its clarity in outlining the perceived relationship between the Orient and the Occident as defined by religion. Allen describes that on the road to Ushnook he met a Kurdish man of some rank who invited the missionary to his house where he was formally received.

All the men were armed with rifles and belts of cartridges about their waists and over their shoulders. I had remarked that the Kurds and the English are of one blood and that I liked to think of them as my brothers.<sup>103</sup> A brave young fellow immediately asked "If that is so why is it that you have gone so far ahead and we have remained so far behind in the world race?" That was a good question and I replied "As I see it, it is this way: - Our fathers, if they were two brothers, started across the steppes toward Europe. The brother who became your father turned south under the Caspian Sea, came into these parts, later embraced Islam, learned of his prophet the ways you follow – that is – they learned to rob, to kill, to steal, to have many wives and to live an idle life. The other brother went over [to] Europe, became a follower of Jesus Christ, learned of Him His way, did the things he taught them – that is – to tell the truth, to work, to abhor idleness, and to make men of themselves. He became our father. What we are we have learned of our religions heads. And now that we have found you, our brothers, in this condition I have come to invite you to come with us and follow Him who gives the greater blessing."<sup>104</sup>

From this first section of his account one can see clearly articulated a perception of the Orient as a real and coherent entity united by the religious path adopted by its population. The Orient is identified with Islam and it is Islam which is perceived as

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<sup>103</sup> By English we can assume that Allen means all 'Anglo-Saxons', including Americans. He is referring to himself as English which was a common enough practice among the American missionaries and one which greatly infuriated the Anglican missionaries in particular Athelstan Riley. See for example: Riley, *The Assyrian Church*, G3200 3.07, 6.

<sup>104</sup> Eli T. Allen, *A Journey to Sulduz and Ushnook, [in lieu of a Personal Report]: June 2nd 1913*. Folder 6, Box. 4, RG-91, PCUSA, CEMR, Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II, Sub-series 2.

the cause of the backwardness and moral laxity of the 'Oriental'. Allen continues by recounting his host's response to his bold and somewhat untactful hypothesis.

Immediately there was a great uproar, the younger men all accepting and defending me, the older declaring the foundations of Islam would give way under such talk from infidels, and that in the good old days the infidel's blood would mark the place where he let such foul words out of his mouth. As they fought among themselves I sat still and quite safe as I saw the strength of the division was perhaps on my side. One old man with a long grey beard remarked when quiet was restored "If we are brothers and you want us to be one why don't you come and be one of us? We are willing." The young braves began to scold but I said "Let him alone, he asked a good question. See his beard is grey. Father," I said, "you have lived many years, you have gained much experience. Can you go back to the young again? No. The young must come to you. So it is with us. I am far ahead on the journey of life. We have received from the Good God many blessings and our lives have been made rich with His love. We cannot come back to you in your low condition but we want now to lift you up through Him who lifts us up to the place where we are. Come up, don't pull others down."<sup>105</sup>

There are many interesting themes in this piece: the providence of God's favour towards the faithful; the progress narrative which sees the civilizations of the 'West' as far ahead of the 'Orient' on a linear pathway of development which is linked to ethics; the narrative of a Western Christendom versus an Islamic Orient; and the somewhat anti-racist notion that individual free choice is what makes a human being *both* moral and successful. The most important point for Allen in this narrative, however, is the concept that only an acceptance of Christ can ensure all of these advantages, and that only the Protestant evangelical approach gives access to Christ through the 'Light' of the Gospel. While the motif of 'Light' has been widely used as a symbol to present the righteousness or veracity of many causes both religious and secular, it has a particular resonance within evangelical

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*



Protestantism.<sup>106</sup> In terms of missionary activity not only can 'Light' be used to invoke a struggle between good and evil as a symbol of goodness, blessing, and truth linked to Biblical texts in both the Old and New Testaments, but it can also be associated with the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit.<sup>107</sup> Ultimately, it is perhaps the direct connection to Holy sanction which is the primary intention of the Presbyterian missionary use of this device of positing 'Light' to their cause.

While the egalitarian principle of the Presbyterian message is clearly in opposition to the Orientalist representation of Orientals as inherently 'other' to Occidentals, the vision of the world articulated by these missionaries is clearly in other ways Orientalist in its assumption of the homogeneity of the Islamic Orient as a place of dark anti-belief. Islam is considered by them to be a corrupting influence and an obstacle to progress and even forms of 'Oriental' Christianity are considered as 'dead' and 'degenerate'. Furthermore, it is clear from Allen's testimony that he perceives the Christian nations of the 'West' as virtuously responsible for an unprecedented world peace. Speaking in response to a question asked of him by a Jewish man, who demanded to know when the Messiah would bring peace to the world, Allen stated that He is already doing so "for the Christian Nations to-day hold the peace of the world."<sup>108</sup> The vacuousness and ethnocentricity of this statement is given greater force when one considers that it was written, somewhat ironically, in 1913, only one year before the outbreak of the First World War in which the

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<sup>106</sup> The Inter-Varsity Press *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* says: "The Bible is enveloped in the imagery of light, both literally and figuratively. At the beginning of the Biblical narrative physical light springs forth as the first created thing (Gen 1: 3-4). At the end of the story the light of God obliterates all traces of darkness: "And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or Sun, for the Lord God will be their light" (Rev 22:5 RSV). Between these two beacons the imagery of light makes nearly two hundred appearances, with light emerging as one of the Bible's major and most complex symbols." *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery: an encyclopedic exploration of the images, symbols, motifs, metaphors, figures of speech and literary patterns of the Bible*. General editors: Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 509.

<sup>107</sup> Once again the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, which is the product of a latter-day Protestant evangelical organisation, points to numerous instances of the use of light in the Bible which have significant rhetorical force. Using quotations from both the Old and New Testaments it demonstrates the use of light as a physical and sacred image expressing the conflict between good and evil; it is used as a symbolic reference for both God and Christ, it portrays the ideal nature of the 'community of believers', and it evokes the coming age of redemption. See: *Ibid.*, 510-12. The entry for light closes with the comment that: "The text within the Bible itself that comes closest to summarizing the range of meanings of light is 2 Corinthians 4:6: "For it is God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Christ" (RSV). Here is the link between creation and the new creation, between OT and NT, between the physical reality and the symbol." *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>108</sup> Allen, *A Journey to Sulduz and Ushnook*.

slaughter of Christian nations by other Christian nations would make a mockery of such a sentiment.

In summary of this section, a very noticeable feature of the textual output, both published and personal, of the missionaries studied in this thesis is their focus upon a very specific Orient; and this is a discernible characteristic of both missions. The Muslim Orient which is the setting for their work was not the only Orient of which these missionaries may have been aware but it was the only one of which they wrote at any length in their correspondence, and it seems to have had a coherent value as a discrete entity in their thought. In terms of the thesis question posed at the beginning of this section, I have demonstrated that both of these missions do indeed talk of an Orient which they conceived of as a real and somewhat homogenous entity. The specific Orient of which they talk is that of a Muslim dominated conglomerate to which they refer in derogatory terms as a 'Mohammedan realm' of despotism, misrule, and tyranny. The result of such a depiction is to invoke a binary of opposition between an Islamic Orient and that of the equally nebulous 'Occidental realm' of Christendom. The missionaries, even those born in Persia, identified with the superiority of 'Western' civilization which is both highlighted and thus defined by the 'otherness' of the Orient in which they were immersed. This binary is pursued further by the missionaries with references to manifest destiny which suggests that 'Western' hegemony is the result of divine favour. In the case of the American Presbyterians divine favour is alluded to in terms of the rise of civilization, industrialization, and liberal government which are all spoken of in association with an evangelical Protestant faith. In the Anglican case divine favour seems to be treated more from the point of view of 'Oriental error' in a narrative which depicts divine disfavour as the result of heretical Oriental Christianity.<sup>109</sup> What is particularly interesting about the methods adopted by each mission in portraying the Orient is that they describe a geographical region in starkly moral terms and in a manner which directly addresses the role and status of the missionaries responsible for these representations; as such it is neither neutral nor objective. It is in this sense a form of identity positioning which expresses a particular understanding of the world and

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<sup>109</sup> Which was seen to be rooted in the Ecumenical Councils of the fifth century and the alleged heresy of Nestorius.

gives meaning to events by establishing links between the individual's perceived role and stock images taken from a diverse culture which includes both an essentialist perception of the world as ontologically divided and religious understandings which may conflict with that essentialism.<sup>110</sup>

It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the missionaries of both the Anglican and the American Presbyterian Missions can be considered to display an Orientalist style in terms of their use of motifs and modes of representation of the region in which they were actively engaged. That is to say, that they were aware of a difference between themselves, as part of a unit defined as 'Western' or 'Occidental', and those 'Orientals' to whom they had come to minister. The deeper question, however, is the meaning which these missionaries attributed to those perceived differences.

### 3.2 'Restoration' and *Essential Difference*: the Orientalism of the Anglican Mission

In the first section of this chapter I outlined how both Anglican and American Presbyterian missionaries can be seen to express an Orientalist style in their writings through their representation of the mission-field as located within a religiously defined homogeneous and oppositional realm to that of the Occident. In this section I will investigate the manner in which the Anglican missionaries articulated the meaning of that difference. While the first section of this chapter dealt primarily with the broad geographical distinction which was imagined to exist between 'East' and 'West', this section looks more closely at the personal and human distinctions which were thought to exist between 'Orientals' and 'Occidentals'. In addition I will examine the concept of 'restoration', the idea of building up and strengthening the Oriental Churches as indigenous institutions (as opposed to the direct proselytisation of

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<sup>110</sup> For identity positioning see: Chapter one, section - *The Concept of Discursive Interaction*. Also see: Hermans, *Culture & Psychology*, 266.

'Orientals' from those institutions), and consider its connection to the particular style of Orientalism displayed in the narratives of these Anglican missionaries.<sup>111</sup>

In chapter one I outlined a theoretical distinction between an Orientalism which explains the difference between 'Orientals' and 'Occidentals' in terms of an unalterable ontological essence (*essential difference*) and an Orientalism which explains that difference as a mutable quality (*circumstantial difference*). In this section I will examine how the Anglican missionary narratives conform to these categorisations and whether it is possible to allocate them to one or other of these two groups. Unlike the previous section, I shall not be looking for motifs, such as 'Oriental dishonesty', because these in themselves and without explanation do not ascribe meaning to the observation of difference. Instead the theoretical focus is placed more specifically upon the modes of representation which explain how these motifs are to be interpreted. Within my theoretical model essentialist modes of representation attribute an unchangeable nature to 'Orientals' within the logical frameworks which structure the missionaries' narratives. For example, the explanation that the 'Oriental mind' is something which is passed on at birth is in conformity with *essential difference*, whereas the explanation of this perceived quality as the result of culture and environment can be said to conform to the a style of Orientalism which can be termed *circumstantial difference*. While both expressions are Orientalist, each is very different in its outlook and has significant implications with regard to the methods appropriate for missionary engagement with the Orient, and consequently informs that debate between 'restoration' and direct proselytisation.

As was mentioned in the first section, the Reverend George Percy Badger was sent out in 1842 to assess the feasibility of a permanent mission to the Nestorians Church, and his published account is a combination of travel journal and ecclesiastical history. On first inspection this work seems surprising, in that it displays little of the stereotypes which one might expect to see in a work aimed at a general or lay audience, as he attempts to reveal the lands and the peoples which he encountered as they appeared to him rather than in conformity to Orientalist

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<sup>111</sup> Coakley notes that Archbishop Benson characterised this method as 'missions of maintenance' which were opposed in their objectives to 'missions of absorption'. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 99.

stereotypes. For example, in relating his experiences with the Shammar Arabs he decried the accounts of previous Orientalists and thus the sanctity of Orientalist precedent:

The halo of romance, which eastern tales and the flowery narratives of some modern travellers, had thrown around this interesting people, gradually disappeared, together with my own fanciful prepossessions in their favour, as I became more intimately acquainted with their domestic and social habits, and began to perceive that the gay hues in which they had been depicted, were rather the pencillings of the imagination, than the sober colours of reality and truth.<sup>112</sup>

This seems to reject the notion of writing within the confines of the particular genre of Orientalist travel writing and to promise that his narrative would not be prejudiced by the pressures of an Orientalist discourse which exerts its influence through the authority of existing Orientalist works. As the account approaches the subject of his missionary aspirations, however, he displays a more characteristically Orientalist style as he vigorously attacks the American Presbyterian mission which was already at work in the Kurdish region.<sup>113</sup> Badger's polemic is simultaneously an attack upon evangelical Protestantism itself, which he refers to as 'dissent', and an affirmation of the 'otherness' of Orientals through the invocation of an 'Oriental' ontology. He states that "if the principles of dissent are unscriptural, so are they also opposed to the genius and sympathies of the oriental mind."<sup>114</sup> Badger elaborates upon the difference between 'East' and 'West' by recourse to a supposed historical 'fact', and one which it would seem difficult to substantiate, that relies upon the precedent of Orientalist prejudices of the time:

Up to the present time, no one form of republicanism in religion has ever arisen in the East; and I am fully persuaded that the present partial success of the Independents will be ephemeral, or lead eventually to the spread of a pernicious rationalism wherever their tenets meet acceptance. They may succeed in spreading abroad a

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<sup>112</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 344.

<sup>113</sup> Dwight and Smith had conducted an exploratory mission in 1829 which was consolidated by a more permanent mission in Urumia led by Justin Perkins and Doctor and Mrs. Asahel Grant in 1834/5. See: chapter 1, section – *The Two Missions of this Study*.

<sup>114</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* vol. 1, 10.

vast amount of secular knowledge through the medium of their schools, and may bring up many eastern youths to argue and to dispute, but the good of it, if any, will rest here. Trained like their masters, to respect no authority in matters of faith but their own individual judgment upon the text of scripture, and united to each other by no other bond than that of a common rejection of some of the errors of their parent Churches, the proselytes can never exist in a compact community [nor] exhibit the outward order and life of a branch of the heavenly vine.<sup>115</sup>

The concept of 'republicanism in religion' points towards the de-emphasis of authority and the decentralisation emblematic of Evangelical Protestantism. Intuitively perhaps the European or American reader of the present day may sympathise with this allegation as to the nature of religious devotion in the Middle East, but this may say more about the residual distortions in our own understanding of the region than it does about the veracity of Badger's claim. Badger's suggestion that no similarly deregulated or non-authoritarian movement has ever existed in the 'East' is a sweeping generalisation which is reminiscent of the Orientalist notion that Orientals were incapable of any form of government other than despotism, and points to a conceptualisation of Oriental religions as conforming uniformly to a generic type associated with rigid hierarchy. The fact that Badger is asserting that no form of republicanism in religion has ever existed in the 'East', and particularly the intimation that it never could, points away from circumstantial explanations of difference and evokes a more permanent and thus innate Oriental nature.

The above expression of *essential difference* is somewhat ambiguous, however, as it not only denigrates the capacity of Orientals but simultaneously attacks evangelical Protestantism. The 'Oriental mind' is described as unable to conform to a manner of thinking and a mode behavior which is merely undesirable for Occidentals on the basis that it is 'unscriptural'. In this way evangelical Protestantism is represented as

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. The term independents refers to evangelical Protestants in general, otherwise referred to as dissenters, but refers here more specifically to the American Presbyterians of the West Persia Mission. The term 'branch of the heavenly vine' alludes to the ecumenical ideal of 'Branch theory' popular amongst members of the Oxford movement (a movement which dominated the Anglican Assyrian Mission) in which the established Churches (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican) are considered to be individual branches of the collective tree, so to speak, of the 'One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church'.

being bad for 'Westerners' but disastrous for 'Orientals', and so the 'Oriental mind' is represented as separating 'East' from 'West' in its inability to function socially without the benefit of tradition and an ordered socio-religious hierarchy.

The Rev. E. L. Cutts, however, seems to have had more faith in the ability of 'Orientals' to cope with the moral and social outcomes of 'Western' education, if not those of 'Western' forms of religion. Writing to a background of Russian incursions into Ottoman territories and their claims of protection over Oriental Christians, he suggests, in seeming contradiction to Badger, that an English style of education is exactly what the Oriental Church needs:

The people are aware of their deficiency; they are very desirous of raising themselves in culture and civilisation; they are impressed with the idea that education must be the first step in this process, and are earnestly asking help to introduce the European system of education. I trust that the Church of England will give this interesting people the very small amount of help and direction they ask. With the natural intelligence and energy and ambition of the people, an English system of education, so infinitely superior to anything in the East, either Turk or Christian, ought to put them in a fair way to become a remarkable people, capable of playing an important part in the future history of these Eastern regions."<sup>116</sup>

The 'important part in the future history of these Eastern regions' alludes to the Nestorian Church's potential to proselytise the Orient to Christianity, and so the caveat to the recommendation of European education is that it takes place within the framework of the existing Oriental Churches.<sup>117</sup> This is emphasised by his claim that the evangelical activities of the American Mission would "tear this ancient Church into pieces."<sup>118</sup> So, in Cutts' narrative, there seems to be a far more nuanced notion of the differences separating Orientals from Occidentals but this is still expressed within the limiting assumption of non-proselytisation. The 'Assyrians' in his narrative are thus held back in progress on a civilizational timeline, a situation which can be ameliorated by the introduction of an English system of education provided it is

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<sup>116</sup> Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia*, 236.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

limited to knowledge appropriate to an Oriental Church. In an appeal for funds for a future mission Cutts' argument to maintain the existing institutional structures of the Orient is bolstered by an appeal to the 'Oriental mind'. "What better messengers of the Gospel can we have for Asiatics,"<sup>119</sup> he asks, "than trained Christian Asiatics? The Eastern mind can thus be met on its own ground!"<sup>120</sup> As such the recommendations of the Rev. Cutts seems to contain elements of both an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference*, in the possibility of reforming Oriental backwardness, and of *essential difference*, in the insistence upon maintaining the Oriental character of the Nestorian Church as the appropriate vehicle for the intrinsic needs of its people and those of all 'Orientals'.

Four years later, in 1882, and four years prior to the commencement of formal mission, Archbishop Tait received advice from the Rev. Tremlett who counseled him to consider once again the limitations of the 'Oriental mind' when evaluating the appropriate form of mission to the Old East Syrian Church.<sup>121</sup> In a personal letter to the Archbishop he counsels that:

Although I have not been to Kurdistan, nor in that part of Syria where Nestorians abound to any great extent, yet I have seen enough to convince me that in common with all Easterners, they are not prepared to appreciate Western ideas, and that any education based upon broad principles or any principles except the narrowest sectarian, will never take hold of the present Eastern mind – whether Nestorian, Assyrian, Jacobite, Jewish, Greek or Mahametan.<sup>122</sup>

This passage flies in the face of Cutts' evidence and displays some distinctly Orientalist concepts; there is the representation of an underlying uniformity to the

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<sup>119</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 74.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Tremlett, the vicar of St Peter's at Belsize Park in London, was a privately wealthy individual who became involved in a committee during the 1880s for the establishment of communion between the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England. See: William Taylor, *Antioch and Canterbury: The Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England (1874-1928)* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 56-60. He was famous as a staunch defender of the American Confederate cause and a somewhat conservative member of the Anglican Church. See: John D. Bennett, *The London Confederates: the officials, clergy, businessmen and journalists who backed the American South during the Civil War* (Jefferson N. C.: McFarland, 2007) , 144.

<sup>122</sup> F. W. Tremlett, *Letter to Archbishop of Canterbury Archibald Tait 27<sup>th</sup> May 1882*, Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 113. It is interesting that Tremlett does not seem to realise that the Nestorians and the Assyrians are in fact the same people.



Orient which overrides the apparent diversity of its creeds.<sup>123</sup> There is also the authority of the Orientalist to make pronouncements upon the specific from a general understanding of the Orient as a uniform object of knowledge. While Tremlett has never been to Kurdistan he is nevertheless content to speak with authority, as an Orientalist familiar with other Orientals, as to the qualities and characteristics of the 'Nestorians'. The concept of the 'Eastern mind' is sufficient to enable anyone expert on matters 'Eastern' to pass judgment and to authoritatively represent *all* 'Easterners'. So, to Tremlett and all those who take his counsel the fact of an ontological 'Eastern mind' precludes all meaningful education beyond the particular sectarian limitations of the Oriental in question.<sup>124</sup> They are, it would seem in this view – as Orientals, locked into the particular compartment constituted by the community into which they were born and, unlike 'Occidentals', they are unable to rise above their origins; above all they are 'Orientals'. This sentiment is nuanced, however, by one word in this quotation, Tremlett speaks of the *present* 'Eastern mind' and thus the implication is that the 'Eastern mind' can conceivably alter over time. This seems inconsistent and it is clear that Tremlett does not consider that education can alter the particular mind-set of the Oriental, and so one wonders how and through what agency the 'Eastern mind' could alter. Equally, it is clear that Tremlett is rejecting the kind of policy that Cutts seems to be advocating through the introduction of an English system of education. We are, however, still presented with a somewhat nuanced and slightly ambiguous sense of the *essential difference* which might be seen to permanently separate the Oriental from the Occidental.

A more crystallised version of the narrative of the intrinsic difference which is assumed to separate Orientals from Occidentals can be seen in the writings of Athelstan Riley. Riley, as mentioned in the previous section, was a knowledgeable amateur on the subject of Eastern Christianity and the chief publicist of the early Assyrian mission.<sup>125</sup> His portrayal of the Syrian communities, as the shattered remnant of a once great people, emphasises their role as an important bulwark

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<sup>123</sup> As an aside I am struck by how much this statement resonates with current popular views concerning the inability of Muslims, taken as a generic and undifferentiated group, to aspire to democracy.

<sup>124</sup> A very similar sentiment is expressed in 1908 in the writings of Lord Cromer, who was the British Consul General of Egypt between 1883-1907, who states, in his book *Modern Egypt*: "Sir Alfred Lyall once said to me: "Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should always remember that maxim." Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind." Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 38.

<sup>125</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 3

against Islam. As was shown in section one of this chapter he describes their situation, in an 1886 report to the Archbishop, by use of a geographical metaphor which both evokes their resilience to Muslim conversion throughout the ages and highlights their Oriental ‘otherness’.<sup>126</sup> This portrayal is given greater relevance as it is framed within the context of the conservative policies of the Sultan Abd al-Hamid. At this time the Sultan was attempting to secure centralised control over the empire through the inculcation of an Ottoman identity which emphasised the Muslim character of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>127</sup> While Riley spoke fervently of the necessity to root out the heresies of Nestorius from the Old East Syrian Church, he also encouraged his audience of missionary supporters by extolling the proselytising potential to which this ancient community could aspire. His judgement was that the Assyrian Church was not “in *actual* heresy”<sup>128</sup> but in a state of ignorance due to its destitution. To this effect he states that the more learned spiritual leaders of this Oriental Church hold to “the true faith of Incarnation”<sup>129</sup> and that only the uneducated Nestorians hold aberrant opinions as to the nature of Christ due to a “lack of Catholic safeguards.”<sup>130</sup> This latter point concerning ‘Catholic safeguards’ is a reference to the High Church Anglicanism which he advocated and is in accordance with his Oxford Movement sympathies and the concept of ‘Branch Theory’.<sup>131</sup> It is also a useful argument to diffuse criticism of the mission from those within the Anglican Church who looked dimly upon assistance to a supposedly heretical Church.

Riley’s standpoint is not, however, entirely consistent and although he adopts a conciliatory stance when speaking of the proselytising potential of the Nestorian Church, he also holds that the very state of deprivation and persecution under which the Old Syrian Church had fallen was a proof of its historical infidelity and heresy.

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<sup>126</sup> See: Chapter three, section - *Orientalism and Protestant Mission*. See also: Athelstan Riley, *Report on the Foundation of the Archbishop’s Mission*, AM-2, 374.

<sup>127</sup> See: Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, and Makdisi, *American Historical Review*, 768-796.

<sup>128</sup> Riley, *The Assyrian Church*, G3200 3.07, 5. Italics in original.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Riley, *Progress and Prospects of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians; being the Report of a Visit to the Mission in the Autumn of 1888, Two Years after its Foundation*, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.12, 27.

<sup>131</sup> Riley states that he was brought up in the Anglican ‘High Church’ tradition and then later, whilst studying at Magdalene College, came into close contact with the most prominent members of the Oxford Movement. In his words, “we did not use the term ‘Anglo-Catholic then, on the grounds that all Anglicans were in the Catholic Church.” Marcus Donovan, *After the Tractarians; from the recollections of Athelstan Riley* (London: Allan, 1933), 1. A significant principle of the Oxford movement was the importance of tradition in the governance of the religious life and thus respect for the ancient ecumenical councils.

This opposing sentiment is given voice in his call to a mission of 'restoration', expressed in an 1889 pamphlet seeking contributions towards the mission, in which he calls upon the Anglican congregation "to raise a fallen Church and minister to a people terribly punished for the sins of their forefathers."<sup>132</sup> The principle that the misfortunes of the Oriental Churches were due to their adoption of heretical doctrines not only presents the rise of Islam as no more than a device for the punishment of wayward Christians, it also allows for the self-congratulatory acceptance of the implicit veracity of 'Western' Christian doctrines over those of the 'East'. To support the theory that the Nestorian Church was nonetheless the only appropriate vehicle for the future conversion of the Orient Riley voices the opinion that all Orientals, unlike Occidentals, derive their moral character wholly from their religion and that this is why they require a formal, if rather superficial, structure to their religious life.<sup>133</sup> Riley warns that should a Western mission destroy an Oriental's "respect for the customs of his fathers, his respect for his clergy, his reverence for his Church and her teachings"<sup>134</sup> then by consequence it would "take away the support of his morals."<sup>135</sup> The conclusion of these observations is that the 'Western' supporter of mission must understand that an Oriental's "moral character cannot stand alone".<sup>136</sup> Riley continues by emphasising this point, saying that even though a proselytised Syrian may appear to have become a good Protestant or Roman Catholic, this is all 'show' and instead he is "in truth nothing better than a consummate hypocrite."<sup>137</sup> This is quite incontrovertibly an example of an Orientalism of *essential difference*, where Orientals are not only perceived to be 'other' to Occidentals but that this alleged 'otherness' is intrinsic to their very nature and cannot be erased or productively modified.

In addition to the Oriental's constitutional inability to develop an individual conscience Riley further explains, in an 1888 report to the Archbishop on the prospects of the mission, that a number of cultural attitudes were also definitive of the 'Oriental character'. Prominent among these characteristics, was an inability to

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<sup>132</sup> Athelstan Riley, *Pamphlet collecting for the Sisters of Bethany* (15<sup>th</sup> December, 1889), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-5, 228.

<sup>133</sup> Riley, *The Assyrian Church*, G3200 3.07, 6.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

carry ideas through into actions and a hopeless inability towards logic.<sup>138</sup> In this manner, Riley describes the Syrian boys at the Mission school as follows: “Like all Easterns, they are deeply interested in matters of dogma”<sup>139</sup> being very quick of apprehension but equally “like all Easterns, they are [...] hopelessly illogical.”<sup>140</sup> To Riley, however, the most prominent failing that the Oriental Christian was supposed to display was an unregenerate propensity towards dishonesty. Speaking of the mountaineers of the Kurdish highlands Riley states that:

Immorality in word or deed is absolutely unknown [...] Against these virtues may be set their national failing, untruthfulness [...] They seem quite unable to appreciate the sinfulness of lying and deceit; they can never be trusted to tell the truth, no matter what the subject is, and the men are worse than the boys. They have no idea of honour, and tell tales freely to each other.<sup>141</sup>

This sentiment is consonant with an earlier story told by Riley in a report of 1884, and which was subsequently repeated by other Anglican missionaries, which warned fellow Englishmen to be wary of itinerant Oriental Christian priests disingenuously collecting relief money in Europe.<sup>142</sup> Riley cautions that “Any Oriental begging for religious purposes should be suspected.”<sup>143</sup> Adding that the:

mixture of honesty and dishonesty in the Chaldean character – a combination entirely strange to the English mind – is calculated to deceive even the most astute, and I can only say that of all the Assyrians or Nestorians who have visited England during the last few years I cannot call to mind one whose word I would believe when his

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<sup>138</sup> Riley, *Progress and Prospects of the Archbishop's Mission*, G3200 3.12, 10.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>142</sup> Riley, *Report of Mr. Athelstan Riley, M. A. 1884*, Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 320. This particular anecdote is repeated throughout the narratives of Anglican missionaries, see: Arthur Maclean, *untitled correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury* (5<sup>th</sup> November, 1887), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 140. Edward Cantuar, *Letter (internal) 6<sup>th</sup> February 1888*, Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 271 note. Also. Wigram, *An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church*, 170.

<sup>143</sup> Riley, *Report on the foundation of the Archbishop's Mission*, 376. Italics in original.

interests were concerned, or to whom I would entrust with confidence the smallest sum of money.<sup>144</sup>

The idea of Oriental dishonesty is a common Orientalist motif and its repeated use as a compound term seems to imply the ludicrous idea that dishonesty is a thing that one would not encounter in Europe. Nonetheless, the importance of the Oriental Churches to Riley is that their traditional nature had ensured the perpetuation of Christian belief amongst a people otherwise reduced to the level of savagery. He states that removal from all civilizing influences had created the:

curious anomaly of a race of wild and savage mountaineers, wilder and more savage than their Mahommedan rulers, and yet clinging tenaciously, in spite of their barbarism and their crass ignorance, to their ancient Church, their ancient liturgies, their ecclesiastical rites and customs, and the faith of our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ.<sup>145</sup>

The formalism of the Nestorian Church is thus presented as eminently suited to the 'Oriental' nature of the Syrians. What is interesting about Riley's narrative is that he moves from the motif of 'Oriental dishonesty', in the previous quotation, to a description of the specific pseudo-racial characteristics of the Syrian people. He states that:

Physically, they are a fine manly race, with good physiognomy, picturesquely dressed, and armed to the teeth; with frank courteous manners, naturally intelligent, affectionate, with a strong love of their country and their religion.<sup>146</sup>

This is an important statement because it clarifies a point of potential ambiguity. Riley could be using the term race to allude to cultural characteristics when he speaks of dress and manners, but the reference to physiognomy makes clear that he is referring to race as a biological concept; an idea very popular in the 1880s. So,

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 377. See also: Riley, *Assyrian Christians*, Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 320. This is emphatically denied by members of the American Presbyterian Mission, for example: "it is a libel to say that people here are not to be trusted at all" Louise Wilbur Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd, 1909-1915: Volume I Introduction 1909-1910. The records of the daily life in Persia of Louise Shedd, missionary, wife, and mother*, Archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Papers, Archives SPP 19. Page. 305.

<sup>145</sup> Riley, *The Assyrian Church*, G3200 3.07, 1.

<sup>146</sup> Riley, *The Assyrian Christians*, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.01, 17.

Riley can be seen to jump from the assertion of a somewhat general Oriental nature, which evokes a binary between Orient and Occident, to the assertion of a specific Assyrian racial nature which has the effect of atomising the concept of the Orient into unique and primordial races.

This rendering of a narrative of *essential difference*, where Assyrians are conceived of as simultaneously Orientals and as a particular primordial race, supports Riley in advocating a policy of cultural non-intervention. The need for education, he suggests, is simply to allow the 'Nestorian' clergy to be able to have access to their own doctrine. The priests and deacons, he explains, are "frequently incapable of reading or writing, and are generally ignorant of the rudiments of the Christian faith. Even the Bishops are better judges of a rifle than of a doctrine."<sup>147</sup> Riley's argument continues by asserting that the Old East Syrian Church represents a peculiarly traditional religious expression which has preserved the Christian faith "amidst infidel invasions and awful persecutions, which would have swept most Western communities from off the face of the earth."<sup>148</sup> Thus the narrative of the *essential difference* between Orientals and Occidentals explicitly requires an Oriental form of religion to minister to their peculiar needs, and the narrative of the doggedness of their primordial nature supports the thesis of their usefulness as the Oriental vehicle which it was hoped would ultimately convert the Orient back to Christianity.

It seems ironic, therefore, that a policy of apparent cultural sensitivity should emerge from the Orientalist concerns of a racist essentialism, but such would seem to be the case.<sup>149</sup> This is perhaps best demonstrated with reference to Riley's argument with the American Presbyterians of Urmia. In his 1888 published report on the prospects of mission Riley accuses the American Mission of naivety. The Presbyterians, he claims, have:

systematically treated the native Christians as if they were Westerns,  
'stimulating a spirit of enquiry' amongst a people whose religious

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<sup>147</sup> Riley, *Report on the foundation of the Archbishop's Mission*, AM-2, 375.

<sup>148</sup> Riley, *The Assyrian Church*, G3200 3.07, 5-6.

<sup>149</sup> The ecumenical and culturally sensitive nature of the mission's work is emphasised in a pamphlet published for the Archbishop, which states that: "The object in view has not been to bring over these so-called Nestorian Christians to the Communion of the English Church, but rather to strengthen and encourage them in developing the work of their own Church." Untitled pamphlet (July, 1884), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 192.

safeguard is their child-like faith, overturning the respect for their Church, and the customs of their forefathers, upon which support their moral character, like that of all Orientals, rests. Endeavouring, in spite of warning upon warning, to repose confidence in a people who have no conception of honour, and instead of suiting their system of education to the Oriental character, striving to bring up Easterns on a Western pattern.<sup>150</sup>

Without doubt, Riley sees the American Presbyterians as terribly naïve in their attempts to change what he perceives to be a fixed Oriental nature. This seems to contradict the ideas of the reverend Cutts, but it is unclear exactly what Cutts had been proposing when he suggested that an English *style* of education would be efficacious in elevating the knowledge base of the Syrian clergy. More than any other statement Riley's starkly Orientalist defense of an Anglican policy of cultural non-intervention and its concomitant accusation of American naivety illustrates how deeply the culturally non-interventionist Anglican policy was entrenched in an Orientalism of *essential difference*. The dispute with the American Presbyterians highlights an Anglican ethos in which one cannot treat Orientals like 'Westerners' because their moral and mental constitution forever distances the Oriental 'other' from the Occidental 'self'. One can perhaps see that the 'Oriental mind', as an idea, can be understood to be the antithesis of the 'spirit of enquiry' which in turn defines the 'Westerner'. It could perhaps also be stated that Riley's standpoint is far more explicit in its attribution of an essentialist and ontological explanation of the difference between Orientals and Occidentals than the formulations of earlier Anglican missionaries. His view, which as publicist was extremely influential, seems to conform closely to the classical model of Orientalism as outlined by Edward Said, in which Orientals were conceived as something of a Platonic essence which could not be made to conform to the ideals of rationalism and honesty which were perceived to be the hallmark of the Occidental.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, it is the debate on proselytisation and westernisation which brings this issue to the fore.

The Reverend Arthur Maclean presents a more nuanced picture and once again reminds us that the Anglican missionaries were individuals with somewhat diverging

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<sup>150</sup> Riley, *Progress and Prospects of the Archbishop's Mission*, G3200 3.12, 46-7.

<sup>151</sup> See: Chapter 1, section - *Orientalism and essentialism*. Also see: Said, *Orientalism*, 38.

points of view which do not necessarily conform neatly to analytical categories. Nonetheless, it is possible to make out a certain underlying ethos which unifies the Anglicans to a degree and marks them out as a group in opposition to the Americans Presbyterians. Maclean's Anglo-Catholic sympathies accorded well with Riley's sentiments and similarly a style of representing the 'Oriental' as ontologically different from the 'Occidental' can be discerned in his writing. For example, Maclean warns his readers that they should not judge Orientals as they would judge Occidentals:

I would caution the enthusiastic lover of Missions against judging this people by European standards. If he does he will be much disappointed. He must rather look for a curious mixture of the most glaring defects with very apparent virtues.<sup>152</sup>

This view, however, is moderated by a more considerate conceptualisation of the causes of the differences between 'East' and 'West' which suggests a more nuanced Orientalism. For example, he refers to the people who are the object of his mission as Syrian, in accordance with their own appellation of the time. Maclean states that: "The name "Assyrian" seems to have been of late years adopted in England as an approach to the name "Syrian," but it is never used in the East."<sup>153</sup> He also describes them as devout, with "an unrivalled love of Holy Scripture"<sup>154</sup> and while extremely ignorant "only too anxious to learn."<sup>155</sup>

Maclean's respect for these virtues is qualified, however, by his opinion that as *Oriental*s they should not be trusted, especially, as has been mentioned, in relation to fund raising under false pretenses.<sup>156</sup> This, he explains, is because they "share the prevalent inability in these longitudes to tell the truth",<sup>157</sup> and he explains that this can only be truly understood by one expert upon the nature of the Oriental.<sup>158</sup> One

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<sup>152</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Some account of the Customs of the Eastern Syrian Christians, otherwise variously known as Assyrians, Chaldeans, or Nestorians* (March, 1888), Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.09, 3.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>154</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Report from Urmi* (8<sup>th</sup> February, 1888), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 271.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Arthur Maclean, *untitled correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury* (5<sup>th</sup> November, 1887), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 140.

<sup>157</sup> Maclean, *Report from Urmi* (8<sup>th</sup> February, 1888), AM-3, 271.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*



can immediately detect the continuity of thought regarding the image held by other Anglican missionaries concerning their 'Syrian' charges, such as the perceived congenital inability of Orientals to tell the truth. However, the Syrians, Maclean argues, are on the whole very moral and have only lost the virtue of honesty due to long centuries of oppression.<sup>159</sup> This statement seems to suggest a more circumstantial explanation of the difference between Orientals and Occidentals, but may also be a somewhat reflexive attack on Islam. In an 1889 correspondence to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Maclean states:

We have endeavoured especially, of late, to instil into our boys' minds the lesson of truth. But remember your Grace's words to me in 1886, that you cannot expect a downtrodden people to be truthful.<sup>160</sup>

So, while Maclean describes Muslims as deficient in morality due to the influence of Islam, Oriental Christians would seem to be dishonest due to the degradation of their oppression under Muslim governance. This seems to suggest that to Maclean the meaning of Oriental difference is not necessarily ontologically fixed but may be due to the circumstances in which Orientals choose or are forced to live. Perhaps it also points to the possibility that the language and explanations of the missionaries are more fluid than a determinative explanation of discursive theory might allow, and that their narratives are more pragmatically assembled from a diversity of competing discourses.

Maclean is not, however, consistent in his Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* and often drifts into a more essentialist representation of Oriental nature. This essentialism seems to be linked to the dream of turning the Old East Syrian Church into the appropriate weapon which will ultimately vanquish the Muslim world through conversion to an Oriental form of Christianity. Maclean expounds his Orientalist theory in some detail and it is worth quoting his thinking in full.

The longer we live in the East the greater difference we find between the way Orientals look at things and the way we look at them. Of course in many things, such as the lamentable way in which women

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letters From Assyria. – No. 8: From Canon Maclean, Urmi 1889*, Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-5, 174.

are treated, our Eastern Syrians have learnt un-Christian habits from the Mussulmans. But many of the differences between them and us arise from their being Orientals. Take for instance the relative respect they pay to an ecclesiastical precept and to a command of the moral law. If a man breaks the whole Decalogue he comforts himself (and his neighbours) with the reflection that “he is a son of man,” or [that] “God is merciful.” But if he breaks his fast, or crosses himself from left to right instead of from right to left, or does not pay the Patriarch’s dues, he is worse than a heathen. This is not mere pharisaism. Whatever the Urmi people may have become, the mountaineers at least (to whom I refer especially) are not hypocritical; it is merely an Oriental way of looking at things.<sup>161</sup>

From such a statement it is difficult to overlook Maclean’s essentialism with regard to Orientals but it is also interesting to note the distinction he makes between learned behavior and a more intrinsic Oriental nature. The learned behavior is presented as afflicting the Christians with characteristics derived from the influence of Islam, whereas the more fixed characteristics such as their approach to religious devotion and their attachment to superficial forms is described as a more generally Oriental trait. It is, however, the more essentialist trait of reliance upon the superficial forms of religious practice which is presented as distancing Orientals from Occidentals, and it is this which gives rise to Maclean’s great concern to avoid enculturation and to try to avoid teaching anything in the mission schools that is fundamentally alien to a distinctly Oriental character.<sup>162</sup>

Added to this Orientalism of *essential difference* Maclean also sporadically makes reference to the idea that humanity is made up of differing races which possess specific qualities and traits but which are not necessarily Oriental. For example at the end of the academic year 1886-1887 Maclean refers to the winners and losers of the exam process in racial terms, stating that:

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<sup>161</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letters from Assyria.- No. 8. From Canon Maclean, Urmi 1889*, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.15, 1.

<sup>162</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letters from Assyria.- No. 1. From Canon Maclean, Urmi January 1883*, Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 13.

At the examination a Persian mountaineer did best among the priests, and a Turkish mountaineer among the deacons and lay people. The mountaineers appear to be naturally a more intelligent race than the people of the plain, though they have far less education, and are in most cases extremely ignorant.<sup>163</sup>

Even more explicitly Maclean describes the origins of the present-day Nestorians as the result of a fusion of distinct races including the “Assyrian nation (who were ‘Shemites’)”<sup>164</sup> mixed in with “Arameans”<sup>165</sup> and “pure Jews”.<sup>166</sup> This clearly demonstrates that Maclean’s own point of view regarding the meaning of Oriental difference was not a clearly outlined theory but more of a pragmatic selection of available images drawn from diverse sources of cultural knowledge. At one instance he seems to be drawing upon notions associated with neo-Darwinian race theory, at others from seemingly older Orientalist notions of the essential difference of Orientals from Occidentals, and then at others from an egalitarian conception of the intrinsic similarity of human nature.

During Maclean’s five year term as a missionary in Kurdistan tension with the rival American missionaries was a constant concern. Friction between the two missions can be boiled down to two related subjects, Christology and method. The “utter difference of our method”,<sup>167</sup> as Maclean put it in a private letter to the Archbishop at a time when tensions between the two missions was high, was that between proselytism in the American case and the restoration of an Oriental Church in the case of the Anglicans. In Maclean’s opinion this difference rendered cooperation with the Americans impossible even though the two missions remained on cordial terms.<sup>168</sup> As has been mentioned, the apparent cultural sensitivity of the Anglican method of ‘restoration’ was not based solely upon a respect for their ancient traditions but equally upon the notion that a ‘crude’ and ‘superficial’ system of belief was essential to suit the *limitations* of the ‘Oriental mind’.

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<sup>163</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letters From Assyria*. - No 3. From Canon Maclean, Urmi May 1887. Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 61.

<sup>164</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letters From Assyria*. – No. 8, 198.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Arthur Maclean, untitled correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury (March, 1887), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 37.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

Throughout Maclean's writing an identifiable style of Orientalism can be discerned that can be categorised as *essential difference*, but Maclean's standpoint is not without ambiguity and even contradiction.<sup>169</sup> This ambiguity seems to point to his individual agency, it appears to be the selection of different ways of explaining Oriental difference to suit the particular stand point concerning the methods of mission. I do not think that this suggests a conscious and cynical uptake of the most effective argument to prove a point, but rather that it indicates, as Jäger and Maier have argued, that individuals develop a discourse position because they are enmeshed in various [sometimes contradictory] discourses.<sup>170</sup>

If we now turn attention to the textual expression of the Rev. William Ainger Wigram, as found in his two published works, the overall style of Orientalism can once again be seen to be overtly essentialist. The early years of the nineteenth century saw a consolidation of European power and perhaps marks the height of European cultural self-confidence and optimism. Correspondingly, his advocacy of a mission policy which 'protected' the Assyrian Christians from the advances of 'Western' cultural influence is pronounced. Wigram conceived of the Orient as a timeless realm which resisted the modernity of an ascendant 'West' but, importantly, his judgment was that this resistance was a good and natural thing. In his work, *The Cradle of Mankind*, published just before the First World War, he states that, "the known evils of the east may be preferable to the unknown crop that will spring from a confusion of East and West."<sup>171</sup> Wigram's trepidation about the encounter, and his fear towards its consequences, are encapsulated in the introduction to this book where he states that "Western reform will not convert the East any more than Alexander's conquests converted it; but it may [instead] evolve unintentionally some new sort of Frankenstein's Man."<sup>172</sup> The notion that a confusion of 'East' with 'West' may lead to an unnatural mutation of the 'East' is a definitively essentialist concept which posits the difference between the two as related to their fundamental and intrinsic natures.

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<sup>169</sup> Geoffrey Nash outlines a similar ambiguity in the writings of Arthur de Gobineau concerning race in which Gobineau does not fit neatly into the role of the characteristic Orientalist. Nash speaks of the sense of equality the exploited populations of the 'East' displayed in Gobineau's work and the fact that Gobineau "detested western imperialism". Geoffrey Nash, "New Orientalisms for old," *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*, edited by Ian Richard Netton (London; New York: Routledge; Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), 93.

<sup>170</sup> Jäger and Maier, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 49. Also see: chapter one, section - *The Concept of Discursive Interaction*.

<sup>171</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 86.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

And while that nature may be altered, Wigram's thesis is that to do so is an unnatural act. What is particularly interesting in this explanation of difference is its advocacy of a policy of separation and isolation of the 'East' but not a corresponding isolation of the 'West', which implies the inferiority of the 'East' in its inability to accommodate 'Western' ideas. While it is feared that the 'East' will be corrupted by the influence of the 'West', no such fear is articulated in the opposite direction; and this perhaps points to the epistemological double standard which Said posited as characteristic of Orientalism.

In an earlier memorandum, ostensibly addressed to the Archbishop but printed and circulated more generally within the Church as a proposal of method, Wigram articulates his clear understanding that the Oriental is separated from the Occidental through the incapacity of the former to attain the kind of rational self-understanding which typifies the latter.<sup>173</sup> Wigram sums up this difference by stating that, it "is always the case that the strength of the western, in dealing with Orientals, lies in the western knowing his own mind."<sup>174</sup> Such a statement, seems to need no justification or proof, but instead is presented as an obvious fact the validity of which rests upon the authority of the Orientalist as expert over the 'Orient'. Here Wigram appears to be drawing upon the stock understanding of the nature of the 'Orient' as it existed within his own unanalysed Orientalist cultural assumptions.<sup>175</sup> The possession of self-knowledge as a unique characteristic of the 'Occidental' is also a notion which allows for the explanation of the intrinsic disparity in power between 'East' and 'West' which lends authority to the 'Occidental' to judge and manage the 'Orient'. In fact the belief in such a notion allows one to see the domination of the 'Orient' by the 'Occident' as a thing both natural and correct.

The motif of Oriental dishonesty is also touched upon by Wigram in his published work, this time in relation to donations given towards charitable ventures to relieve the poor and to construct orphanages in Kurdistan. His sentiment seems to be that it

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<sup>173</sup> William Ainger Wigram, *Memorandum on the Policy of the Mission of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Assyrian Christians* (July 1907), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-16, 54.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* Note the striking similarity to Bernard Lewis' comments about "the rather Western habits of self-analysis and self-criticism". Lewis, *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East*, 25.

<sup>175</sup> See: chapter 1, section - *The Concept of Discursive Interaction*.

is unfair to hold Orientals to the same high standards as Occidentals as it is in their intrinsic nature to be dishonest. He explains that:

An Eastern does not understand the administration of a Trust. What you give, you give; and may Allah reward you for your charity. But, when you have given it, it is yours no longer; and why should you complain if its owner finds that he needs it for something different to his original intent?<sup>176</sup>

This essentialism is seemingly contradicted, however, when Wigram describes visiting the 'Orient' as like going back in time to medieval Europe. This lends to his narrative a view of the *circumstantial difference* which would allow for the redemption of 'the Oriental' through the mechanisms of 'progress'. He frequently expresses the romantic sentiment that the Orient of today parallels the England and Scotland of times long past and protests that:<sup>177</sup>

it is the grossest injustice to judge the modern East by a twentieth-century standard. If you choose to go and live in mediæval times [...] you must not complain if the people act in a fashion reminiscent to that age.<sup>178</sup>

This is a style of thought which places the Orient in a subordinate position with regard to Europe, which is seen as having already learned from such uncivilized times and progressed to a higher level, but which holds out the possibility that the Orient may one day achieve a similar level of civilization. Equally, Wigram's description of the Mar Shimun betrays none of the essentialist symbolic language which he uses to portray the 'East' more generally. In a private letter to a fellow missionary Wigram expresses his opinion that the Patriarch of the Old East Syrian Church "is after all a young man: of honest and lofty intentions, and more than average ability; but exposed to very great temptations, and in a position of terrible difficulty."<sup>179</sup> Similarly, one gets a sense of the perceived underlying 'sameness' of

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<sup>176</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 170.

<sup>177</sup> Wigram is referring to the fiction of Sir Walter Scott and the tales of 'Rob Roy', for examples see: *Ibid.*, vii-viii, 114, and 167.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 321-2.

<sup>179</sup> William Ainger Wigram, Letter Wigram to Heazell (11<sup>th</sup> June, 1905), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-15, 86.

mankind from Wigram's comments, in his *Cradle of Mankind*, about the endemic corruption that he saw in the governance of the Ottoman Empire. Through his adoption of a narrative style which represents the Orient as separated only by time on a scale of technological and social progress Wigram creates the sense that the Orient would one day be like the Occident. In this vein he states that "our boasted superiority to this sort of thing [vis. corruption] is of very recent date".<sup>180</sup> This juxtaposition of *circumstantial difference* with *essential difference* in Wigram's writing seems self-contradictory. One might argue, however, that perhaps there is no contradiction in his narrative; after all, to say that the Orient resembles Medieval Europe is not to say that Orientals are identical to Occidentals of a past age, merely that there exists a similarity. Nonetheless, there seems to be a distinct ambiguity in Wigram's narrative which swings from *essential difference* to *circumstantial difference* and then back again, and this appears to suggest a certain pragmatism in his use of motifs and narrative style rather than the impress of a monolithic Orientalist discursive pressure.

The most consistent and unambiguous mode of representation throughout Wigram's writing, however, is that of *essential difference* and this is nowhere more clear than in his polemic against other missions. In his published work Wigram relates that the Russian Orthodox, French Roman Catholic and American Presbyterian missions all accept the basic notion that Syrians can become full members of their congregations in much the same manner as Occidentals.<sup>181</sup> This should not be the case, he suggests, for the Church of England. "Do you improve an Oriental Christian"<sup>182</sup> he asks, "by taking him out of the Church of his fathers and inducing him to join any other body?"<sup>183</sup> Wigram's argument is that the Syrians lack the ability to internalise their religion in the same manner as Western Christians do, regardless of any amount of education.<sup>184</sup> Instead, he states that Syrians merely accept the externals of their religion as handed down by tradition, the Syrian is, he says:

Christian, only because his fathers were Christian before him. There is no doubt that his religion is an external armour of inherited habit and

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<sup>180</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 76.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

belief; and that he is, so to speak, crustaceous rather than vertebrate in his spiritual construction.<sup>185</sup>

This is a rather shocking picture that Wigram paints of the Syrians, and by inference all Orientals, as belonging to a lower order of species in a spiritual version of Darwinian evolution. The rhetoric here is quite starkly racist, albeit in allegory, in its conceptions and this is amplified by the allusion to biological taxonomy which presents his argument in a pseudo-scientific manner. His reasoning continues by asserting that if the Syrians were taught new forms of religious expression these would merely replace their old traditional 'armour' with a new set of customs, rather than encompassing a spiritual rebirth. Wigram puts it bluntly, that:

if a zealous reformer extracts the lobster from his shell (a feat which can be performed, if you disregard the lobster's feelings), even that drastic operation does not enable him to develop a backbone.<sup>186</sup>

Harking back to Riley, Wigram further reinforces this highly essentialist notion by stating that, while their innate spiritual constitution is of a lower order to that of the European, it nonetheless has certain advantages:

Further, invertebrate though the Oriental Christian may be (and, therefore, of course, of a lower type than the vertebrate European Protestant), he has the peculiar powers of his species; and can endure an amount of cutting and hacking, without losing his faith, which would altogether destroy the spiritual life of a higher type of Christian.<sup>187</sup>

This statement is related to the view, already discussed in the accounts of the other Anglican missionaries, that the day would come when a specifically 'Oriental Christianity' would be the vehicle by which Islam would be overthrown and the Orient would once again become a Christian realm. In his *History of the Assyrian Church* Wigram argues that the Christianity of the 'East', while more superficial, is the more authentic an expression of the original Christian faith.<sup>188</sup> In this vein he suggests that

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* Brackets in original.

<sup>188</sup> This seems to echo Renan's association between Islam and the limited potential of the Semitic 'races'. Hourani describes Renan as seeing Islam as a product of the Semitic spirit, "whose contribution to human culture was monotheism; 'once this mission had been accomplished the Semitic races rapidly declined, and left



Christianity could be more effectively “proclaimed [so] as to suit the oriental, when [it was] taught by easterns to their brethren; and when a religion, intrinsically eastern, was presented without the western externals which a western is apt to identify with its essence.”<sup>189</sup> Wigram repeats this sentiment in the *Cradle of Mankind* with a greater emphasis upon the efficacy of Oriental Christianity in the conversion of Muslims.

There is no doubt that Christianity if preached as the Asiatic faith which it really is, and not the European religion which we have (inevitably and properly) made it for ourselves, can do much for the Islamic races.<sup>190</sup>

This is entirely in keeping with his clearly articulated racist views as to the divided nature of mankind and is perhaps the accommodation of his broad and authoritative knowledge of Church history with new and hegemonic ideas of race in popular usage at the turn of the century.<sup>191</sup> The hope that the Assyrian Church would one day proselytise the Muslim majority of the Orient is complimentary to Wigram’s belief that the Orient should be ‘contained’, and both ideas lead naturally to a method of missionary practice which I have referred to as ‘restoration’. It is only natural that one would prefer a method of ‘restoration’, in which the Oriental character of the Assyrian Church was preserved, if one believes that ‘Western’ ideas would corrupt the very nature of the Oriental. Thus the style of imagining the Orient which I have described as *essential difference* leads naturally to and supports the Anglican missionary method of ‘restoration’. It is difficult to know whether *essential difference* requires (and thus generated) ‘restoration’ as a method, or whether the method of

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it to the Aryan race to march alone at the head of the destinies of humanity’.” Hourani, *Europe and the Middle East*, 13-4.

<sup>189</sup> William Ainger Wigram, *An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church or the church of the Sassanid Persian Empire, 100-640* (London: S.P.C.K, 1910), 134.

<sup>190</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 204.

<sup>191</sup> These concepts are perhaps best understood in relation to hegemonic ideas of Supersessionism. Professor Ivan Davidson Kalmar of the University of Toronto explains how, throughout the long nineteenth century, ideas about the Christian gospels superseding the authority of Judaism became enmeshed with racial concepts of a Semitic spirit which opposed that of an Aryan race associated with Western dominance. In this world-view, which relies heavily upon the philosopher Hegel, the Oriental religions, including earlier forms of Christianity, are the consequence of a Semitic spirit which engenders “self-alienating slavery” and is opposed to an Aryan spirit which engenders a “self-realizing citizenship” and which distinguishes the Orient from the Occident. See: Ivan Davidson Kalmar, “Arabizing the Bible: Racial supersessionism in nineteenth-century Christian art and biblical scholarship,” *Orientalism Revisited Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*, edited by Ian Richard Netton (London; New York: Routledge; Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), 176-183.

'restoration' requires an outlook which might be described as an Orientalism of *essential difference*; but it is nonetheless clear that the two are linked and support each other.

The above analysis has focused upon the meaning given by the Anglican missionaries of this study to the differences which they perceived to exist between Orientals and Occidentals. While there is a certain level of ambiguity and individual variance within the knowledge production of these missionaries, there can nonetheless be said to exist a certain consensus of opinion as to the nature of Orientals which I have characterised as an Orientalism of *essential difference*. This vision of the Orient as a place in which the inhabitants are intrinsically, and not circumstantially, different from Occidentals fits neatly with a missionary policy of cultural non-interference and the ecumenical model of 'restoration'. It is a moot point as to whether the principle of *essential difference* dictated a policy of restoration, or whether the policy of restoration prompted modes of representation which justified the method. What is more certain is that the mode of representation and the method of missionary engagement supported each other and helped to polemicise the proselytising American Presbyterian mission. In broad terms, therefore, the Anglican mission can be perceived as an attempt to protect the 'Orient' from the encroachments of 'Western' interference on the basis that the 'Oriental' was not the same, nor could ever be the same, as the 'Occidental'. The variance of expression within the mission by its individual members is, nonetheless, of great interest, and points to a process in which individuals, somewhat pragmatically, worked out their unique identity positions within the context of the discourses that most effected their thinking. This ties together the individuality of personal experience and volition with the collective imperative of a social and discursive world.

### 3.3 Proselytisation and *Circumstantial Difference*: the Orientalism of the American Presbyterian Mission

In this section I will investigate the manner in which the American Presbyterian missionaries attributed meaning to the differences they perceived to exist between themselves and 'Orientals'. I will also examine the relationship between this understanding of difference and the aspiration to proselytise the 'native' communities of the region to their own particular brand of religious expression. The object of this section of my thesis is thus two-fold. Firstly, I will evaluate the style of Orientalism which can be observed in the knowledge production of the American missionaries and I shall attempt to categorise it as either *essential difference* or *circumstantial difference*. Secondly, I will investigate any apparent correlation that can be detected between this style of Orientalist representation and the American Presbyterian policy of direct proselytisation as a method of engagement with the Orient.

Perhaps the most contentious issue separating the American Presbyterian mission from the Anglican mission was that of method. In their personal correspondence and their published pamphlets and books the Anglican missionaries strongly criticised the Americans for, as Athelstan Riley put it in 1889, "striving to bring up Easterns on a Western pattern".<sup>1</sup> This criticism was not only aimed at their policy of direct proselytisation but also at the establishment of American mission schools which taught non-religious subjects in addition to their religious message. I will therefore begin this analysis by discussing the ethos behind the educational policy adopted by the American mission. A good example of this ethos was articulated by the missionaries of the Urumia mission station just prior to the First World War, and although this excerpt is taken from a report filed at the very end of the period of study it is useful to start here in order to set the tone of the American mission.

The Report of the Educational Committee in Urumia for the year 1911 urged that they should respond to an "intellectual awakening"<sup>2</sup> in the region and to the "new desire which its people, including all classes of Moslems and even Kurds, [were]

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<sup>1</sup> Riley, *Progress and Prospects*, 46-7.

<sup>2</sup> Educational Committee, *Report of Educational Committee, 1911*, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 3: Station Reports. Box 4. Folder 10.

showing for western education.”<sup>3</sup> The report is an official document which carries the signatures of nine missionaries from the Urumia mission station and was sub-filed under station reports. Its tone is more formal than the letters and personal reports filed by the missionaries but nonetheless shares a narrative style which highlights the providential nature of their vocation. From the above quotation it can be seen that the American missionaries were articulating the view that their educational efforts were a response to local demand, rather than being the imposition of ideas and values upon an unwilling audience. This is an important point because it frames their activities as a desire to give something of value to their proselyte congregations and also to the greater community of the region rather than wishing to impose their culture upon them. There was, of course, also a religious dimension to the aims of this program of secular education, and the proselytising purpose of their educational work is implied in the report as follows:

We see in the boys and girls who are seeking admittance to our schools in unprecedented numbers the best possible soil for the sowing of the Gospel seed as well as a pathway into their homes.<sup>4</sup>

There was therefore a two-fold aim to the educational activities of the American mission, a desire to fulfil the missionary ideal of service to mankind, and a more distinctly pragmatic objective of preparing the way for conversion. As the report states it was considered laudable “to raise up men thoroughly equipped mentally to be leaders in the great political and social changes which [were] taking place in [the] country”.<sup>5</sup> Yet, while the dissemination of democratic civic values, ideas of individual accountability, and above all a knowledge of Scripture, was seen as a way to transform pupils into the model citizens of their developing nations, it was also intended to provide the means by which the logic and veracity of their religious message could be delivered. In this vein the Report concludes with the following affirmation:

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* The committee was made up exclusively of those missionaries serving in the field at that time and the report is signed by: Robert M. Labaree; Mrs. S. G. Wilson; E. T. Allen; Miss E. D. Lamme; Charles R. Pittman; Mrs. C. R. Pittman; Miss. Helen T. Grove; F. G. Coan.

<sup>4</sup> Educational Committee, *Report of Educational Committee, 1911.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

We believe in our schools of every grade only as they fulfil this great missionary aim, and serve to implant the seeds of Christian manhood and womanhood in the hearts of the scholars.<sup>6</sup>

When one considers the audience, the Board of Commissioners and the supporters of mission back in America, there is of course the possibility that the missionaries were to some extent dressing their personal desire to assist and support the community in the language of the public discourse of the mission to proselytise the Orient. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that although the missionaries themselves associate the knowledge they were imparting with the broadly conceived notion of 'Western' ideas, the principle aim was to inculcate a sense of Christian manhood and womanhood. This suggests that their intention has less to do with the dissemination of 'Western' ideas *per se* than with the sharing of a very particular bundle of values which are more specifically both American and Presbyterian and which consequently reject many other supposedly 'Western' concepts and principles.

In terms of a style of Orientalism, this policy could only reasonably be based upon a conceptualisation of Orientals as capable of assimilating what the American Presbyterian missionaries considered to be 'Western' ideas. Furthermore, the goal of proselytisation itself implicitly relies upon the notion that what is good for the 'West' is also good for the 'East'. Therefore, at the broadest level the American Presbyterians wished to share the benefits of a specifically imagined 'Western' culture with 'Orientals' and ideally this meant the redemption of a region which, as I have shown in the first section of this chapter, they perceived to be blighted by the influence of Islam and a 'dead' Christianity. These concerns reveal a view of the differences separating Orientals from Occidentals as being the result of environmental factors, and this style of narration fits neatly into the category which I have termed *circumstantial difference*.

The underlying objective of sharing the benefits of their putative 'Western' culture with 'Orientals' can also be discerned in the much earlier personal reports (1871) of

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* This standpoint can also be seen explicitly stated in later Educational reports. Louise Shedd et al affirm that, "we wish to emphasise the importance of using the educational work in the future still more than in the past as an evangelistic agency, and not as an end in itself." Louise Wilbur Shedd, Hugo Arthur Muller, and Lenore Russell Schoebel, *Report of Educational Committee. Urumia 1912*, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 3: Station Reports. Box 4. Folder 10.

the missionary George Whitfield Coan in an obituary for his friend and fellow missionary Joseph Gallup Cochran.<sup>7</sup> Coan writes of Cochran that the aim of his missionary life was “[t]o build up a church untrammelled with any remnants of a hierarchy or of superstition, organized for self-distinction and self-support.”<sup>8</sup> This quotation expresses the evangelical ethos of the mission which, although moderated by communal debate and the extremely remote guidance of their council of elders back in America, emphasised the individualism characteristic of radical Protestantism.<sup>9</sup> As such it is egalitarian in its belief that all of humanity could accept the same Gospel message and that the proselyte communities had the innate capacity to govern themselves ecclesiastically. The individual nature of salvation is further evoked in an excerpt from an 1870 letter to the Board of Commissioners from John Haskell Shedd who describes in hopeful terms the prospect of the expansion of mission to Hamadan in Persia. Through the device of an anecdote, he describes how a model convert first receives the ‘truth’ of the missionaries’ message, is then personally moved by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and then continues by spreading the Gospel Word himself in a system of proselytisation that might today be described as ‘viral’ in its method. He recounts the story as follows:

The first man who received the light was a brother named Yohannes[,]  
the movement of the Holy Spirit in Yohannes’ mind & his desire to  
enlighten others was met & strengthened by the arrival of the  
Oroomiah brethren [Syrian converts] & books. The books then did the  
work.<sup>10</sup> They were brought & read & Yohannes was ready to aid in  
expounding & expressing the life-giving truth.<sup>11</sup>

A number of points are worthy of note in this quotation. The personal nature of a direct conversion is in contrast to the non-proselytising Anglican approach which was

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<sup>7</sup> Who died of Typhus during the terrible famine of 1871; a famine which devastated the region, precipitated Kurdish raids, and wracked the mission with hardship and death.

<sup>8</sup> George Whitfield Coan, *letter November 22, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter. 55.

<sup>9</sup> In the case of the early West Persia Mission this was the central committee of the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions which was later superseded by the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations.

<sup>10</sup> Presumably Shedd is referring to the translated volumes (from the missions printing press) of the Gospel, catechisms and other works of Protestant exegesis.

<sup>11</sup> John Haskell Shedd, *letter May 25, 1870*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter. 1. The grammar is a little odd, as is the excessive use of the ampersand, but I have avoided editing the quotation for the sake of faithfulness to the original. It is my impression that the use of the ampersand was considered very modern and erudite, although to the present day reader it may not seem quite so elegant.

primarily concerned with operating on an institutional level. While the Anglican missionaries showed concern for the individual members of the Syrian community to whom they ministered, they did so within the rubric of a mission which sought to teach the existing precepts of the 'native' Oriental Church rather than trying to convert Syrians individually to an alternative form of Christian doctrine and practice. The proselytising ethos of the American Presbyterians on the other hand was concerned far more with engaging the individual on a one-to-one basis as an equal possessed of an undiminished capacity to assimilate the same message of salvation as the 'Occidental' missionaries themselves. Furthermore, the American Presbyterian missionaries did not vest authority in Churches or a hierarchy of power but in a direct reading of the Gospels and a reliance upon the 'life giving' agency of the Holy Spirit. The American missionaries frequently alluded to the 'Gospel Word' as being the 'Light' which illuminates the darkness of unbelief in these allegedly dark 'Mohammedan' lands.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the role of the missionary, either 'Occidental' or 'Oriental', had only the status of a conduit for this force, and this is a situation that greatly reduces the missionaries' authority over the 'Oriental'.

The importance of this method of missionary activity to the study of Orientalism is that it would be difficult to conduct such a personal evangelical program without a belief in the spiritual equality that must necessarily exist between 'Orientals' and 'Occidentals'. It is a decentralising 'style of thought' which dilutes the authority of the 'Occidental' over the 'Oriental' and reduces hierarchy by emphasising the importance of the somewhat mysterious force of the Holy Spirit in the process of conversion; a force which makes no distinction between 'Oriental' and 'Occidental'. In short the 'viral' method of conversion does much to eliminate the notion of the 'Oriental' as an inferior being incapable of rising to the level of the 'Occidental'. Also of interest in this quotation is the emphasis that is being placed upon books as unlocking meaning, and this may in part explain the importance which the American Presbyterian missionaries placed upon basic secular education as something of a prerequisite in the process of conversion.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Rays of Light* was also the name of the locally printed newspaper of the American mission. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 106.

<sup>13</sup> As an aside, one might add that if Protestantism may be considered in some measure to be the product of printing and mass literacy then the establishment of elementary schools and the provision of printed materials in the vernacular by the West Persia Mission represent the duplication of these environmental conditions, and

The way in which Yohannes is depicted highlights another point which seems to depart from a typically Orientalist narrative. Yohannes is not described in racial terms or even as an 'Oriental' but simply as a brother in faith, a descriptive style which downplays the significance of Oriental 'otherness' and *essential difference*.<sup>14</sup> If the difference between Orientals and Occidentals is expressed as being due to a lack of education and the absence of the 'living' Word of God, then it is clear that this difference was perceived to be alterable and not ontologically fixed. As was shown in the previous section, the Anglicans throughout the period of analysis regarded the American Presbyterians as naïve in their assumption that Orientals could be treated as if they were Occidentals. Conversely, the American missionaries could not understand how the Anglicans could ethically deny any human being the chance of redemption. Writing at the turn of the century and in response to conversations with the Anglicans, Fred Coan articulates his bemusement at their approach to mission in a personal report to the Board as follows:

It is to me so strange that men with so much self-denial, so much in them that you cannot but admire, can go there and simply confirm and strengthen the people in the dead formalism and false hopes that have kept them down so many years – that they will calmly affirm that they have nothing to do with correcting evil or reproving sin, but that their duty is to prevent our wicked work of drawing out from that sacred church and making men of those who were beasts.<sup>15</sup>

This is a clear expression of an aspiration to change the very nature of the 'Oriental' which relies upon egalitarian assumptions consonant with an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference*. This is not to say that the American missionaries were not Orientalists, they still articulated a belief in the 'darkness' of the 'Mohammedan' realm, but it does suggest that their Orientalism took a very different form to that of the Anglicans. Furthermore, their Orientalism is evidenced by the simple fact of their frequent articulation of the 'Orient' as a geographical space in which customs and

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suggests an underlying desire to set in chain those same processes in the 'East' which had revolutionised the 'West'.

<sup>14</sup> The Orient was perceived by the American missionaries as different from the Occident principally in that it lacked the Gospel Light, which these missionaries wished to bring to Orientals; and that 'Orientals' lacked a 'true' understanding of the Gospels which was seen by them as a catalyst for the Divine Grace which this Light represents.

<sup>15</sup> Frederic Gaylord Coan, *letter January 30, 1901*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.273. Index, Vol. 196, Letter. 8.



practices alien to those of the 'Occident' are axiomatic, but this categorisation of their views only affirms their Orientalism as a form of representing the 'other' and does not on face value seem to have any connection with imperialism as a political act. On this theme John Shedd relates his experiences in a Russian spa in the year 1881. In an account of his journeys to and from the mission field included in a personal report to the Board he explains his understanding of 'Oriental' practices as being cultural artefacts. What is interesting about his comments is that he sees the Orient in terms of customs and practices which emanate from the Islamic 'East' and overflow into the Christian 'West' slowly diminishing as one approaches the of civilization of modernity. Shedd writes that:

The doctors of Russia have the awkward custom of making no charges –but expecting their patients to make them such remuneration as each one is inclined & able to do. This is an Orientalism that still suits Russia I suppose & brings them more money than a strict business method would do. To one coming from Persia these places seem very beautiful & comfortable, to one coming from the West they would seem less so. There is a roominess & restfulness not found I imagine in the watering places of Western Europe but not so many of the luxuries of civilization.<sup>16</sup>

It would seem that to John Shedd Orientalism is a question of custom, culture and ethics, as opposed to an ontological essence, and is a developmental concept which is also linked to civilization and progress.<sup>17</sup> In a similar vein, Joseph Plumb Cochran,<sup>18</sup> wrote in 1882 to the Board on the consequences of increased transitory economic migration to Russia from Persia and its effects upon the Christians of Urumia.<sup>19</sup> He states that:

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<sup>16</sup> John Haskell Shedd, *letter July 6, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 168.

<sup>17</sup> Louise Wilbur Shedd, the wife of John Shedd's son – William Ambrose Shedd, speaks similarly about "the oriental politeness and palavery that was necessary" to organise the teaching of the daughter of a local dignitary. Louise Wilbur Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd, 1909-1915: Volume I Introduction 1909-1910. The records of the daily life in Persia of Louise Shedd, missionary, wife, and mother*, Archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Papers, Archives SPP 19. Page. 158-9.

<sup>18</sup> The son of Joseph Gallup Cochran.

<sup>19</sup> Work opportunities in Christian Russia in the 1880s presented a lucrative alternative to work in Persia, and thus Nestorian Christians (alongside Armenians) formed a floating workforce in Russian Armenia.

All who leave Oroomiah, are thrown into great danger and temptation. Acquiring customs and ways of living & speaking, too often of deceit and lies, of which they know nothing here; and bringing to their home and posterity western diseases, as they do, the yearly migration cannot but be looked upon with great concern and regret.<sup>20</sup>

The above commentary is of course somewhat paternalistic but it also demonstrates a view of the people of Urumia as being formed by their culture and tradition, rather than as being fixed in some kind of 'Oriental' essence. One might comment that Cochran's statement displays a concern similar to that of the Anglicans, that Orientals should not be contaminated by 'Western' ideas, but it is important to remember the context of Cochran's statement. He is not deploring all 'Western' influence, because that would invalidate the educational policy at the heart of the mission, it is only the specifically negative influences of particular aspects of modern civilization and industrial society which Cochran is decrying. This is an important point because it demonstrates that the American Presbyterians sought to inculcate, in their schools, a particular bundle of civic and social values which are peculiarly Presbyterian as much as they are 'Western' or American. Unlike the Anglicans they did not wish to isolate the Syrians from 'Western' civilization but rather hoped to equip them with the skills necessary to negotiate the hazards which they saw as common place but avoidable elements of modernity. The sentiment articulated suggests that the American missionaries imagined that the Syrians would learn bad habits to which they were, as yet, ill-equipped to deal; not because they were constitutionally unfit for modernity (as in the Anglican view) but because they were not yet ready for such a challenging environment.

In opposition to the Anglicans, the Americans sought to teach those aspects of 'Western' culture which they considered to be virtuous; such as their religious beliefs and those civic values associated with a selectively remembered American history of liberty and equality. A nuanced perception of the dangers facing migrant workers

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph Plumb Cochran, *letter July 10, 1882*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 263. It is interesting to note that Cochran talks of the Syrians as learning dishonesty from working in Russia when so many of his contemporaries speak of Oriental dishonesty as a generic trait, this would seem to disrupt the discursive regularity that one might expect to exist in the missionaries' texts.

leaving for Russian Armenia was expressed a decade later by Frederick Gaylord Coan in his report to the Board of Commissioners:<sup>21</sup>

This gradual growth in taste and living should by no means be regarded as an unmitigated evil. The world is pressing closer and closer to us every day, and the people cannot be forced back to the style of living that belonged to their forefathers.<sup>22</sup>

This quotation conveys much less anxiety towards the expansion of 'Western' cultural influence or towards its effect upon the Urumia brethren than does the Anglican expression, or even that of Cochran, and it also implies that Orientals were perceived as capable of productively assimilating the more wholesome aspects of 'Western' culture. It is also interesting to note that one can detect here a dialogue within the writings of the various missionaries where conflicting views and interpretations were argued and worked out over time. As time went by the inevitability of 'Westernisation' becomes a more common theme in the American missionary narratives and was indeed an idea embraced by the members of the Presbyterian mission. Writing in 1910, a diary entry by Louise Wilbur Shedd expresses how the spread of technology, primarily the telegraph and the railroad, were brining 'Western' culture and ideas much closer to the Syrians and their neighbours. This expression may be more moderated as it is not aimed at either the Board of Commissioners or an audience of missionary supporters but nonetheless it displays a confidence in the Syrian's ability to manage modernity. She states that:

We are really getting much nearer to civilization [...] I am afraid the East will lose some of its charm when it gets a hustle on it, but its got to come. We ought to believe that the blessings that will come from the West will more than counterbalance the disadvantages.<sup>23</sup>

In this quotation it can be seen that while there was some trepidation about the harmful effects of 'Westernisation' the overall sentiment is that the 'progress' which these changes represented was not only inevitable but something to be embraced. Such an attitude reveals an expectation that 'Orientals' have the capacity to become

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<sup>21</sup> The son of George Whitfield Coan.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Gaylord Coan, *letter October 21, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter 171.

<sup>23</sup> Louise Wilbur Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd*, 263.

‘Westernised’ and that this is, ultimately, a good thing for them. Perhaps this reveals a good deal of ethnocentricity, but not the kind of essentialism of fixed ontological characteristics which I have demonstrated to be indicative of the Anglican missionary view of the Orient and which is supposed to be characteristic of Orientalism more generally. Furthermore, even the American Presbyterian’s ethnocentrism is nuanced because the package of values which they promote are not definitive of a particular ethnic group but of a much more specific group of peoples bound by a particular confessional belief and who represent only a minority sentiment within the American nation.

In relation to the egalitarian ethos of the American Presbyterian mission it should be remarked, however, that they were not averse to making reference to race when trying to convey the perceived physical characteristics of the communities they encountered. For example, William Redfield Stocking whilst talking of the people of the region around Bas (Baz)<sup>24</sup> in Ottoman Kurdistan during the 1870s states in a letter to the Board that “there are several Nestorian villages in that district, the individuals of which are among the most sturdy & independent of their race.”<sup>25</sup> An important caveat of the use of the word ‘race’ here is that it is not used to impute Oriental features or to separate ‘East’ from ‘West’ but simply to imply a loosely conceived pseudo-scientific genetic relationship between the Nestorians of the mountains and those of the plains of Urumia, and to infer that the former were more hardy than their lowland cousins.<sup>26</sup> Also, there are many references to ‘nationality’ but the meaning seems not to impute racial characteristics or an ontological essence so much as to allude to perceived cultural norms. Louise Wilbur Shedd for example, writing in a personal letter of 1909, spoke of the character of the Persian people in reference to the boycott of Russian tea and sugar. The boycott was an anti-imperialist response by the common people of Persia to Russian political interference in the north of the country under the Anglo-Russian Entente of the 31<sup>st</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Baz is a district between Hakkari and Bahdinan, see map.

<sup>25</sup> William Redfield Stocking, *letter January 21, 1873*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter 127.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Irwin, insightfully points out the varied use of racism and racist theories during the nineteenth century and thus the futility of trying to generalise about its meanings. His central point is that the “tendency to generalise about racial characteristics was not something invented by nineteenth-century Orientalists, nor was it confined to white Europeans”. Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, 173.

of August 1907 and the subsequent occupation of Tabriz by the Russians.<sup>27</sup> Louise Shedd says of the people that:

nothing could express better the feeling the people have towards the Russians than to have these pleasure-loving Persians willing to give up a holiday and their beloved tea to express their sorrow at having foreign troops in the country. The poor Persians haven't as much strength as pride, I fear.<sup>28</sup>

It is also worthwhile pointing out that the Presbyterians were not always appalled by the character and disposition of the peoples they encountered in the 'Orient', in fact they were frequently impressed by 'Orientals'. Once again Stocking relates his experiences in a report of travels through Kurdistan in 1873, speaking of the tribal Nestorians of Tkhoma he states that "the people here seem "well to do" & there is an air of thrift & enterprise about their habitations which it is very pleasant to see."<sup>29</sup> One can detect perhaps that Stocking is trying to say that there was something almost Protestant about these people which evokes a sense of similarity and consequently defies the kind of expectations of an Orientalist style of thought that one would expect to see given Edward Said's assertions of the power of the Orientalist discourse over Occidental thought.<sup>30</sup> John Newton Wright is also complimentary as to the character of the people and the potential for education that existed amongst the Muslim population. He records his appreciation of the people in an 1890 report of the progress of work among Muslims in the district of Salmas to the north of Urumia as follows:

The Mohammedans of Salmas are friendly, & we are doing what we can for their evangelization, & education. In this village (Oola) there have been from twelve to fifteen of their boys in one school all winter. Some of them are bright & quick at learning.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Nikki Ragozin Keddie, *Modern Iran: roots and results of revolution* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2003), 69-72.

<sup>28</sup> Louise Wilbur Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd*, 221.

<sup>29</sup> William Redfield Stocking, *letter January 21, 1873*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter 127.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Said states that "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric." Said, *Orientalism*, 204.

<sup>31</sup> John Newton Wright, *letter March 28, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter 101.

Similarly Louise Wilbur Shedd, writing some 20 years later, states of Urumia that “the friendliness and cordiality of our Moslem friends is very gratifying”.<sup>32</sup> She also strongly denounces the popular notion that all Orientals were untrustworthy, asserting that “it is a libel to say that people here are not to be trusted at all.”<sup>33</sup> It will also be recalled from the earlier quotation of Joseph Plumb Cochran, speaking on the dangers of economic migration, that he stated that the Syrians know nothing of deceit and lies.<sup>34</sup> This shows a strong divergence from the essentialist narratives of Oriental difference and underlines a diversity of thought upon the subject of the Orient which defies the discursive regularity which might be expected of a dominant Orientalist discourse. Later in his report on Salmas, John Newton Wright continues with his advocacy of the character of the Muslim population by saying that:

Recently when the news of my father’s death came to hand, about two thirds of all who called to offer their sympathy were Mohammedans (Turks or Kurds). Another evidence of their friendship is the way they invite us to their weddings.<sup>35</sup>

In some measure this undermines the anti-Muslim rhetoric of some of the other American missionaries, such as Benjamin Labaree, and is thus a demonstration that a range of views existed among the individuals who made up the Presbyterian mission. No doubt they all felt that a Protestant Christian education would be superior to the influence of Islam but it is also clear that some of the missionaries were impressed by the civility of the Muslim communities in which they worked. It is possible that this variance is due to proximity, as those missionaries who are complimentary about the Muslims are generally those assigned to work specifically amongst them; or perhaps it is an indication of pragmatism, that in being committed to working amongst Muslims the missionaries sought to see the virtuous side of those people. It might be said in this respect that it is more easy to hate and

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<sup>32</sup> Louise Wilbur Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd*, 305. It is interesting to contrast this statement made in 1910 to her first impressions of ten years earlier, where she states of her Nestorian servants that “Everybody is dishonest, or at least may be, so everything has to be kept under lock and key.” Louise Wilbur, *To Persia to Teach*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 278. Also see Susan Reid Sterrett, *Personal Report: Susan Reid Sterrett, 1911-1912*. RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 2: Personal Reports. Box 4. Folder 6.

<sup>34</sup> Vide ante.

<sup>35</sup> John Newton Wright, *letter March 28, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter 101. Brackets in original.

polemicalise an abstraction than it is to hold such views in regard to the people amongst whom one has frequent and personal contact. The missionary Mrs. Mary Fleming Labaree, writing in her 1911 annual report to the Board, vividly describes her hope for the proselytisation of the Kurds in the coming years:

The time is ripe for the advance on the Kurds, the coming of the liberal Sheikh Abdul Qadir, signs of movement away from the marauding to the agricultural life, the demand for schools, and the impress made by the Syrian Christians, all point toward this. If we can only prepare a translation of the Gospels in the Kirmanji Kurdish as the 1<sup>st</sup> reading book, and get it into circulation before Moslem books are ready for the purpose, it will mean again of many years [sic] in the evangelization of the Kurds.<sup>36</sup>

In relation to converts to Protestantism there is a definite sense in the writings of the Presbyterian missionaries throughout the archive that they considered 'Oriental' converts to have the same basic qualities of humanity as any 'Occidental' might possess. This egalitarian ethos is expressed in an obituary written by Benjamin Labaree, and included in his letter to the Board of Commissioners in 1871, for Pastor Abraham a Syrian convert and a pillar of the nascent Syrian Protestant community. Labaree writes of the Pastor that:

For thirty seven years [...] he has continued in active labor under the care of the missionaries. He was a man of marked gentleness of character, and, among the earliest converts, had led a consistent character [sic] as a Christian and preacher, respected and beloved throughout the people.<sup>37</sup>

There is in this piece a discernible paternalism perhaps, in that the Pastor was considered to be 'under the care of the missionaries', but the tone of description is markedly human and never refers to him as an Oriental or as a kind of generic

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<sup>36</sup> Mary Fleming Labaree, *Personal Report of Mary Fleming Labaree, Year 1910-11*, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 2: Personal Reports. Box 4. Folder 6. I think that the last sentence is meant to convey the idea that the prompt production of the Gospel in Kirmanji would save many years of work in the proselytisation of the Kurds to Christianity.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Labaree, Jr., *letter September 12, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter 48.

Syrian – but simply as a man, and a good man at that. Some ten years later, during the terrible famine in the winter of 1879-80 Benjamin Labaree comments favourably upon the character of one of the Syrian Protestant communities. Speaking of Georg Tapa, a community which he describes as “a village that has felt the power of the gospel more than any other”,<sup>38</sup> he proclaims to the Board that the fruits of their missionary labour are now beginning to appear.<sup>39</sup> In a statement which appears to justify the missionary work as much as it does to extol the virtues of the community he explains that:

The brethren there have grappled with the destitution in their midst as only you would expect a Christian community to do. Their church leaders have proved themselves worthy of the part they fill, both by their own liberality and by their wise and successful measures to relieve the poor. [...] We offer it as a study to those who set lightly by the practical result of missionary labor; and as another [study] of the dreadful callousness, if not universal, of the Mohammedans to the suffering of their own religion, in spite of the exalted place given to charity by the Koran.<sup>40</sup>

In this example the community is referred to as Christian without any qualification as to race or other essentialising categorisation, and is represented as being possessed of a wise and liberal leadership. Such a description of beneficent conduct would be flattering to an American community as much as to a Syrian one. To Benjamin Labaree their status as Christians, in the constrained sense of the kind of Christianity he considers to be legitimate, is enough to fully describe them. Conversely, he does not waste the opportunity to attack Islam as a religion insufficient to the task of ensuring righteous action and he concludes with the scriptural quotation “by their fruits shall ye know them.”<sup>41</sup> This last line of commentary is insightful as it demonstrates an American Presbyterian view based upon Scripture in which the group is judged by the fruits of their collective actions and not by their words or, more importantly to this thesis, by the accident of birth.

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<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Labaree, Jnr., *letter February 4, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 30.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*



Miss Lenore Schoebel, speaking in 1914 on the brink of the First World War, after a two week sojourn in a predominantly Muslim village makes a similar attack upon the perceived failings of Islam in her first personal report to the Board:

Let those who think Mohammedanism is sufficient for its people spend a similar two weeks among them, especially the women. We found scarcely a woman who had not been divorced or who was not one of the several wives of one man, and not one did we find who was happy in her home. Either her husband maltreated her or her mother-in-law oppressed her or she was sick with no one to care whether she lived or died and all of them sure of a speedy divorce unless they meet the demands of their lords. And many of them were so young, too. We saw one little undersized girl of not more than ten years of age, a bride of several months.<sup>42</sup>

Such a narrative demonstrates the perception of humanity in circumstantial terms, and is a statement to the effect that the most important of those circumstances, for good or for ill, is that of religion. It does not state that such practices are 'Oriental' but instead clearly places the blame upon Islam as the formative agent, and the implicit message is that these customs can be remedied through proselytisation to Protestantism with its proclaimed egalitarian values.

Another good example of this representational Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* can be found in John Shedd's description of the 'wildness' of the Kurds. He deplores the 'desert' which the borderlands between Persia and the Ottoman Empire had become in the year following the Ubayd Allah rebellion of 1880, saying that "large districts of well watered fruitful soil [are] lying waste waiting for good government & somebody other than Kurds to turn the desert into fields & vineyards."<sup>43</sup> This 'wildness' is not expressed as an essential or natural quality of the

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<sup>42</sup> Lenore Schoebel, *Miss Lenore Schoebel. Personal Report 1913-14. Urumia Station*, West Persia Mission, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 2: Personal Reports. Box 4. Folder 6.

<sup>43</sup> John Haskell Shedd, *letter August 31, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 182. This is just after the 1880 Ubayd Allah rebellion and the Kurdish incursions into Persian territory during which the town of Urumia was besieged and the reverend Shedd was a principle negotiator on behalf of the missionaries and the town. This prejudice against the Kurds seems to be fairly wide-spread among the Presbyterian missionaries

Kurds, instead he affirms “how greatly these wild Kurds need the Gospel.”<sup>44</sup> He thus represents the Kurds as in need of education and the action of the Holy Spirit to temper their ways and to turn them into good sedentary agrarian citizens.<sup>45</sup> This attitude is all the more significant coming as it does just after the Kurdish siege of Urumia. What is also clear is that the blame is squarely placed upon Islam as a negative influence upon the tribal Kurds, and that the remedy is proselytisation; “how & when”<sup>46</sup> he asks “are these wild men to learn the Gospel of peace & love?”<sup>47</sup> Thus to John Shedd the wildness of the Kurds is something which can change through education and the action of the Holy Spirit, and is not something ontologically fixed. Some twenty years later Louise Wilbur, writing in a personal letter of an encounter with well-armed Kurdish tribesmen, gives another example of an American Presbyterian outlook which upholds the underlying similarity which exists between all peoples and all races. She states that the party of Kurds:

were on their way to meet their new chief, who had just received the sanction of authority from the officials at Tabriz. In spite of their guns and cartridge belts, their daggers and swords, I can't make them look as fierce as Kurds ought to [be], and it was hard to believe that they were the perpetrators of all the atrocities we hear of, for they look just like folks.<sup>48</sup>

Beyond the influence of Islam another stumbling block which John Shedd suggested, in the above quoted letter, was in the path of turning the people of the borderlands into good and honest citizens was “the extreme degradation of the people & especially the women – Nestorians as well as Kurds & Turks.”<sup>49</sup> Above all, it is the squalor of their living conditions which gives rise, in his narrative which seeks to persuade the Board of the importance of proselytising the Kurds, to an interesting

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and is may be explained by the fact that their most frequent encounter with the Kurds was in the form of representing the Syrian Christians against them in disputes.

<sup>44</sup> John Haskell Shedd, *letter August 31, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 182.

<sup>45</sup> This sentiment is also expressed by Mary Fleming Labaree: Mary Fleming Labaree, *Personal Report of Mary Fleming Labaree, Year 1910-11*, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 2: Personal Reports. Box 4. Folder 6.

<sup>46</sup> John Haskell Shedd, *letter August 31, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 182.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Louise Wilbur, *To Persia to Teach, collected letters of Louise Wilbur 1899-1900*, Archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Papers, Archive SPP 19. Page. 116-7.

<sup>49</sup> John Haskell Shedd, *letter August 31, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 182.

correlation between cleanliness and spirituality. The narrative adds in more detail that in these war-beleaguered lands:

The wretched, filthy abodes nearly underground, in which men live, must degrade them. The long passage leads you into utter darkness – the effluvia of the stable is nearly past endurance, the stable door & house door open near each other & the house is filled with the offensive odor. The house itself is hardly better than a stable, the sight of naked children & of women clothed in rags & their degrading work in cleaning out the stables – raise the query how can they have pure hearts & clean hands in such abodes?<sup>50</sup>

The tenor of these observations suggests therefore that it is environment, including the physical environment, and not *essential nature* which is presumed by Shedd to make the human individual virtuous or otherwise.

As I have already suggested, the most important of all the ‘environmental’ factors working to the detriment of the people of the Orient was, in the view of the American Presbyterian missionaries, the influence of Islam. It was, however, not solely Islam which was considered to be an important pervading environmental factor which reduced Orientals to their present debased state. As is demonstrated in the following quotation, an allegedly ‘dead’ Christianity was also deemed by Benjamin Labaree to be an almost equally strong negative influence upon the ‘Oriental’, and this significantly separates the American Presbyterians from the Anglicans. The Anglicans did not see Oriental Christianity as ‘dead’ but merely as erroneous in a few particulars of doctrine. Writing of the expansion of proselytising activities to the city of Maragha in 1871, Benjamin Labaree describes to the Board the general situation through the evocation of a generic representative individual living in that city, and proceeds with a description of how Labaree imagines the salvation of that individual would come about.

In that remotely hitherto religious city, dwelling in the debasing atmosphere of Mohammedanism and in the gloom of a dead Christianity, having the Word of God indeed, but reading it with veiled

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

eyes, striving, all in vain, to work out for himself the higher life demanded by conscience and the Law, then, and thus, the doctrine of [\*<sup>51</sup>] grace by the blood of Jesus meets him.<sup>52</sup>

There is in this piece a tacit reference to the fact that Maragha and thus the greater part of the Orient was once religious but that, since the advent of Islam, Oriental Christianity had decayed into a 'dead' religion. The meaning of Oriental Christianity as being dead is also expounded by William Ambrose Shedd in a report upon the people of Amadia in 1893. He states that:

The people are religious and doubtless the mixture of faith and hatred would require thousands to die a cruel death rather than recant. The centre of the faith is not Christ, [however,] and his is only a name. As a man said to me "We keep the fasts, say our prayers and take the sacrament, and what more do you want?" Except in rare cases there is no sense of need, no conviction of sin and no desire for change.<sup>53</sup>

To William Shedd, therefore, Oriental Christianity is a dead formalism, in which the striving of the individual for a connection with God is absent having been replaced by outward ritualistic forms and social conformity. Yet he is convinced, however, that given the opportunity the people of the region can be saved by the same approach to religion that saves the 'Occidental'. His commentary upon the inadequacy of Oriental Christianity to serve the spiritual needs of humanity is quite at odds with the standpoint of the Anglicans, who, for their part, seem to suggest that it is just such a superficial form of Christianity that is required to suit the supposedly 'crustaceous' spiritual constitution, to use Wigram's expression, of an ontologically fixed Oriental nature.<sup>54</sup> Thus it can be seen that the Orientalism of the American Presbyterians is diametrically opposed to that of the Anglican missionaries in its explanation of what is meant by the differences perceived to separate Orient from Occident. The *circumstantial difference* of the American Presbyterian is a very different

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<sup>51</sup> This adjective is unclear in the original, but seems to be the word "free", although "divine" or "liberating" would seem more apt.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin Labaree, Jr., *letter September 12, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter 48.

<sup>53</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *Account of Tours, W. A. Shedd, Amadia – Turkey August 9, 1893*, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series VI: Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1881-1937. Box 18. Folder 13.

<sup>54</sup> To use Wigram's expression of the superficiality of the Syrian spiritual constitution.

phenomenon to the *essential difference* of the Anglicans and it is thus hard to formulate a notion of Orientalism as a monolithic and homogenous discourse.

The idea of the erroneous nature of Oriental Christianity is also invoked by Edmund Wilson McDowell in an report to the Board of Commissioners concerning the widespread massacres of Christians in Ottoman Kurdistan in 1896. The early 1890s had seen the establishment of an irregular mounted force drawn from the Kurdish tribes of eastern Anatolia by Sultan Abd al Hamid. The purpose of the Hamidiya Cavalry, as they were designated, was ostensibly an imitation of the Russian Cossack regiments but their true utility lay in their repressive function in the suppression of Armenian nationalism.<sup>55</sup> Edmund McDowell, however, argues that the situation: "is a crisis in the cause of Christianity in these lands and [...] its issue in deliverance and [in] Gospel blessing depends, as it has done in all ages, upon the Church's attitude toward God."<sup>56</sup> He continues by saying that it "has been a matter of concern to us that we cannot see more indications of real turning to God in confession & supplication,"<sup>57</sup> and he concludes that, if "they do so turn to God we are confident that, whatever the powers may do or not do, the Lord will deliver his people and will make these persecutions a means of greatly extending his kingdom."<sup>58</sup> This narrative thus takes the misfortunes of the Nestorians and Armenians and turns them into evidence of their spiritual waywardness and consequently supports the Presbyterians' programme of proselytisation.<sup>59</sup> The outright rejection of the Nestorian Church as the legitimate institution of salvation for the Syrian people expresses an American Presbyterian belief in the superiority of their approach to religion. This superiority is not vested, however, in their identity as Occidentals, as it is not argued that the situation would be resolved by the 'Western' powers, but resides in their identity as Presbyterians who have a 'correct' approach to religion. This distances the standpoint of the American Presbyterian missionaries from the Orientalism of the Anglican missionaries in two important ways. Firstly, the American missionaries do not accept that an Oriental form of Christianity is efficacious in saving the souls of

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<sup>55</sup> David McDowell, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 59-64. David McDowell.

<sup>56</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *letter January 21, 1896*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.126. Index, Vol. 12, Letter. 134.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to speculate that such narrative justifications would be more difficult to substantiate after the First World War when a belief in Divine approval of the 'Western' nations, as the bearers of civilization and the purveyors of a global peace, had been significantly shaken.

'Orientals' any more than it is of saving those of 'Occidentals'. Secondly, the American missionaries' identity as Presbyterians is an identity which they fully believed Orientals could adopt. Both of these positions are clear indications of a belief in the equality of the human mind and spirit, and both undermine the concept of the 'Oriental' as ontologically 'other' to the 'Occidental'. Furthermore, when one considers that the Presbyterians held similar views of the redundancy of Roman Catholicism in the 'Western' world then the utility of labelling their denigration of Oriental Christianity as an Orientalist practice is thrown into question. The pragmatic use of such a polemical argument in the context of the proselytisation of the Orient can perhaps be made to conform to Orientalism but it can more convincingly be considered as simply a more general sectarian prejudice.

This gulf between the approach of the American Presbyterian mission and that of the Anglicans constituted a serious bone of contention between the two missions and formed the subject of many rhetorical battles between the two. The bench-mark of authority for the American Presbyterians was looked for in visible signs of Grace which were thought to indicate God's favour, and during the early 1890s those signs were detected in the form a spiritual 'revival'.<sup>60</sup> In late March of 1890 Frederic Coan, echoing the writings of many Presbyterian missionaries in Urumia and Tabriz as can be found in the archive for this period, reported to the Board upon what he called a "new spirit in our midst."<sup>61</sup> This sign of Grace was taken as a display of God's approval, but some months later Coan was to caution that unfortunately it would seem "many do make public confession who have had no work of grace upon their hearts."<sup>62</sup> This was an important issue to the Presbyterians and indicates a great concern that conversion had to be both voluntary and sincere, a point which will have bearing on the subject of imperialism in the next chapter.

Also in that year, on his return from Ottoman Kurdistan, Edmund McDowell, in a report which did as much to condemn the Anglican mission as it did to justify the Presbyterian missionary effort, commented upon this phenomenon as follows:

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<sup>60</sup> This is a term used by the missionaries which alludes to the spiritual revivals in America which took place at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

<sup>61</sup> Frederic Gaylord Coan, *letter March 28, 1890*, FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter. 96.

<sup>62</sup> Frederic Gaylord Coan, *letter October 21, 1890*, FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter. 171.

I was greatly rejoiced on my arrival to learn of the work of grace which has been carried on among the Oroomiah Churches this winter & spring. Such seals of God's approval of our work are very reassuring in these times when we are meeting with much opposition from those who claim that they [the Anglicans] alone are pleasing to the Lord & alone observe His commands. What can they show as a gift from the Master that can at all be compared to this gift of ours, hundreds of renewed souls, hundreds of contrite but now joyful hearts? So far as we can see God has in no way signified his pleasure in them. There are no signs of awakening among their people & the fruits of their labors are not "righteousness & peace & joy in the Holy Christ."<sup>63</sup>

In this quotation one can see that although the American Presbyterian missionaries had faith in the legitimacy of their mission to displace the Oriental Churches, they nonetheless looked for evidence which proved this belief. One can also detect the sense of annoyance at the Anglicans for opposing their methods by supporting the Old East Syrian Church against their proselytising activities. Frederic Coan, writing in 1901, describes the Anglican mission as holding the people of the Syrian community to "their old superstitions and dead forms."<sup>64</sup> This understanding of the "dead formalism"<sup>65</sup> of the Old East Syrian Church is also articulated by William Ambrose Shedd who argues in a letter to the Board that the theological character of the Old Church could be attributed to "a subtle and doubtful speculation as to the Person of Our Lord",<sup>66</sup> which has produced a "spiritual as well as intellectual atrophy"<sup>67</sup> and a Church "very sluggish in its spiritual life."<sup>68</sup> All of this conforms closely to an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* which explains the perceived differences between 'East' and 'West' in terms of environment and culture but which espouses that the authority of the Presbyterians lies not in their Occidental status but in the veracity of their understanding of both Scripture and spirituality.

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<sup>63</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *letter April 12, 1890*, FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter. 109.

<sup>64</sup> Frederic Gaylord Coan, *letter January 30, 1901*, FM10 F761a r.273. Index, Vol. 196, Letter. 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *letter March 2, 1901*, FM10 F761a r.273. Index, Vol. 196, Letter. 34.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

Another missionary commenting on the city of Maragha in 1881, Samuel Graham Wilson, also evoked the innate equality of humanity by commenting upon the capacity for improvement among Orientals. Describing the potential benefits of an educational program in that city he describes their “intelligent interest”<sup>69</sup> when “the Gospel was presented,”<sup>70</sup> evoking an appreciation for their capacity to learn and assimilate the Presbyterian message. He does, however, slip into an easy style of Orientalism as he recounts that the “parables especially seemed to take hold of their minds as suited to their oriental mode of thought & life.”<sup>71</sup> I interpret this as referring more to their educational limitations than it does to their innate ability. It does not seem to suggest that, as Orientals, their minds are naturally constituted to favour stories over rational exegesis and argumentation, but instead due to their low standard of education such stories are more familiar to them. It also seems to illustrate how easy it is to slip into hegemonic forms of speech without considering the potential meaning of such articulations or its consequence in terms of the intrinsic power relations to which they can be said to allude.

Another aspect of the American Presbyterian mission which distances it from the somewhat monastic policy of the Anglican mission, which sent out unmarried male priests and nuns, was the familial aspect of the American mission structure. The general policy of the West Persia Mission was to send out American missionaries either as married couples, with women in a supportive role, or as individual females who would occupy the role of teacher to the children of missionary families, in a role not dissimilar to that of a governess.<sup>72</sup> This familial policy seems to have been a deliberate attempt to personify the family values which were central to their style of religious expression but also involved the work of outreach to ‘Oriental’ women. Clare Midgley has underlined the need “to study the construction of imperialism as a masculine enterprise”<sup>73</sup> and this deliberate policy of the American mission would seem to touch upon the patriarchal values at the heart of the mission’s ethos. While the active agency of female mission staff in the work of proselytisation seems to set

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<sup>69</sup> Samuel Graham Wilson, letter April 18, 1881, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 151.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> In addition to this work these female missionaries would also engage in a considerable amount of outreach work to the Christian, Jewish and Muslim women in the wider community, and including the Ahl-i Haqq.

<sup>73</sup> Clare Midgley, “Gender and Imperialism: Mapping the Connections,” *Gender and Imperialism*, edited by Clare Midgley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).



them apart from a stereotypical image of the subjugated middle-class Victorian woman, attention needs to be paid to the context of their apparent liberation.<sup>74</sup> Firstly, while the presence of a female voice is apparent in the textual record of the mission archive, it is noticeable that the frequency of letters within the archive is predominantly male; a fact which belies the obvious numerical superiority of women in the mission. Secondly, leadership roles, except in areas strictly defined as 'women's work', were exclusively taken up by male missionaries. Furthermore, the ethical justifications for this 'women's work' were firmly rooted in attempts to turn 'Oriental' women into virtuous Christians and good mothers within the American Presbyterian cultural model. This situation closely parallels developments within the British evangelical movement and its activities in India as described by Jane Haggis.<sup>75</sup> In both cases the Orientalist perception of "the 'Asiatic' practice of secluding women"<sup>76</sup> was used to justify a specific role for women missionaries but only within the context of existing patriarchal missionary values which defined the limits of female agency. Thus the "endeavour women missionaries are involved in becomes not one simply to convert, educate or enlighten, but to impose/introduce a very specific set of gender roles and models belonging to Victorian middle-class culture."<sup>77</sup>

In divergence from this general practice of Americans marrying other Americans, however, stands the example of John Newton Wright, who was married to a Nestorian convert, and his story is instructive in terms of the perception of race equality within the American Presbyterian mission.<sup>78</sup> There appears to have been no stigma attached to this marriage and Wright appears to have been devoted to his spouse who he referred to as an equal.<sup>79</sup> Upon the tragic murder of his wife by an

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<sup>74</sup> For a well-documented analysis of Protestant evangelisation conducted by women in the context of the British colonisation of India see: Jane Haggis, "White women and colonialism: towards a non-recuperative history," *Gender and Imperialism*, edited by Clare Midgley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

<sup>78</sup> I am struck, however, by the contrast which is offered in Barbara Merguerian's account of the racial/cultural aloofness of the ABCFM missionaries towards their Armenian protégés. There appears to be some considerable variation between the ABCFM's approach and that of the Presbyterian Board towards both education and equality and this is something which deserves further investigation. See: Barbara J. Merguerian, "'Missions in Eden': Shaping an educational and social program for the Armenians in Eastern Turkey (1855-1895)," *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, edited by Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 256-7.

<sup>79</sup> See: John Newton Wright, *letter June 9, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter 131.

Armenian school teacher in the Spring of 1890, in revenge for that school teacher's dismissal from the mission for alleged adulterous relations with the family's nanny, a shock wave can be detected in the mission archive letters.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately Benjamin Labaree summed up the tragic events in a letter to the Board by strongly discouraging "such mixed marriages",<sup>81</sup> not on the basis of some kind of racial inappropriateness but on account that it gave rise to jealousies.<sup>82</sup> Labaree's argument was that the Armenian was outraged by the fact that he had been disciplined and thus disgraced by a Nestorian, albeit a convert to Protestantism, who was thus of lower standing than himself.<sup>83</sup> All of this displays a marked absence of racial discrimination on the part of the missionaries who appear to regard a convert to Protestantism as one of their own regardless of their putative Oriental origins. That is not to say that the Presbyterians did not believe in race as a distinguishing characteristic but that due to the equality of the human spirit before God it was an insignificant consideration regarding human worth.

In section one of this chapter I quoted Mary Jewett's 1871 representation of the Orient as an Islamic space and it is worth recalling those words from her first report home to highlight the difference between the Anglican perception of Oriental nature and that of the Presbyterians. Miss Jewett states that "it is only by the grace of God that I and all my people are not sunk as low in the depths of degradation, ignorance and evil as any nation of the earth"<sup>84</sup> and that the grace of God would bestow the benefits of industrial civilization and prosperity upon a Persian state which had embraced their Protestant Christian message.<sup>85</sup> In this narrative what makes the 'Occidental' superior to the 'Oriental' is 'the grace of God' and the 'heed' given to the message of the Gospels (as understood by the Presbyterian missionaries), and it is the absence of this quality that is represented as all that separates the Orient from sharing in the manifest destiny believed to have been bestowed upon an ascendant America. Such a perception of humanity breaks down the ontological barrier

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<sup>80</sup> For a full account of this tragic story see: John Newton Wright, *letter June 9, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter 131. For comments upon the tragic event by other missionaries see: Vol. 6 letters, 119, 123, 124, 125 & 126.

<sup>81</sup> Benjamin Labaree, Jr., *letter June 14, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter 130.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* I found this rather surprising because I had the impression that the Nestorian/Assyrians looked down upon the Armenians and not the other way round. Perhaps it is true that they each looked down upon each other?

<sup>84</sup> Mary Jewett, *letter November 1, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter 53.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

between 'Oriental' and 'Occidental' which is presumed to be a definitional component of Orientalist narratives. Miss Jewett also mentioned that Persia and the mountains of Kurdistan could become the equal to any nation through the action of "a liberal government, a true Christianity and a free enterprising people".<sup>86</sup> It is interesting to note that a missionary should point to liberal government and free enterprise as prerequisite for prosperity, and it cannot be ignored that these are values expressed in equal measure to Christianity.<sup>87</sup> This I interpret as a direct indication that secular values formed a strong part of the message preached by Presbyterian missionaries. It indicates a desire towards a benign and a voluntary exportation of ideas, not just their Christianity nor simply their technologies but a whole bundle of cultural values related to their specific American-Presbyterian identity.<sup>88</sup> John Shedd's enthusiasm in promoting secular work habits as an integral part of the moral character supports this view as he urges the Board, in 1890, to invest in technical education:

I have emphasised the need of [the] industrial work habits of industry & the means of living by the hands as well as by seeking for some kind of salary. The manly character comes through [the] conscientiousness of self-help & of trust in God & not in dependence on foreign lands & foreign means.<sup>89</sup>

This statement is at once anti-imperialist, in its aspiration for the independence of the proselyte community, and a declaration of the malleability of human nature including that of 'Orientals'. The conflation of secular and religious values alluded to by Miss Jewett and John Shedd is perhaps epitomised in the image of the missionary doctor whose religious mission is mingled with a scientific expertise and a reliance upon empirical logic. Perhaps the most iconic figure of the West Persia mission, and one

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Once again this fusion of evangelical Protestantism is explored by Mark Noll who suggests that this convergence is historically rooted in the passage of events of the eighteenth century but which were somewhat diminished by the events of the American Civil War. Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). It would appear from the evidence presented in this thesis that this brand of evangelistic Protestantism was still of great consequence to mission long after the end of the catastrophes of the Civil War.

<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, rather than a desire to subdue and dominate it shows a willingness to lift up and liberate. The missionaries' cause is expressed as a wish to share the perceived benefits of a way of life (as much to proselytise) which was seen by them as having brought great prosperity to the United States of America.

<sup>89</sup> John H. Shedd, *letter September 7, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter. 164. Shedd is referring here to the end of foreign involvement in Persia and the euthanasia of mission.

who fills this role, is that of Joseph Plumb Cochran.<sup>90</sup> He was the son of the Urumia missionary Joseph Gallup Cochran and was born in Seir in 1855 and lived the greater part of his life in Persia and Kurdistan until he was struck down by typhoid in 1905.<sup>91</sup> He must surely have felt the region to be his home and one wonders how this would have reinforced the proselytising notion of the universality of humanity and diminished the sense of 'otherness' towards his 'Oriental' brethren.<sup>92</sup> His personal connection to the land of his birth does not, however, mean that he was not an Orientalist in the sense of one whose knowledge production accepts the notion of the Orient as a real and oppositional geographical unit to that of the Occident. As was shown in section one of this chapter he used an anecdote of the inhumanity of a particular Muslim towards his wives and neighbour to polemicise Islam as a religion which promotes injustice.<sup>93</sup> His Orient is thus presented as a land of injustice due to the domination of Islam but one which can be redeemed through the overthrow of Islam through proselytisation. He thus presents the 'Oriental' as *circumstantially different* to the 'Occidental' and simultaneously justifies his own activities as a proselytising missionary in the region. Curiously, however, Joseph Plumb Cochran occasionally lapses into expressions of a more essentialist nature, speaking in 1898 at a memorial service he describes Nestorian theology in terms of a 'Syriac mind'. In a speech reproduced in a published work by the Secretary of the Board of Commissioners, Robert E. Speer, Cochran explains why theological thought had not developed since the days of Nestorius:

Definite and logical development has not gone much farther, due partly to the character of the Syriac mind, impulsive in initiative, and often vigorous in execution, but not constructive of either theological or ecclesiastical system. Another reason, perhaps the principal one, is

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<sup>90</sup> Of whom the Secretary of the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, Robert E. Speer, wrote and published a soaring eulogy. Robert E. Speer, *The Hakim Sahib, The foreign Doctor; A biography of Joseph Plumb Cochran, M.D., of Persia*. New York: Revel, 1912. Not to be confused with book dedicated to Harry P. Packard, a later missionary doctor to Persia.

<sup>91</sup> Speer, *The Hakim Sahib*, 285.

<sup>92</sup> Was he not, after all, an Oriental himself?

<sup>93</sup> See: section - *An Oriental Realm of 'Mohammedan' Domination*.

that the vital conflict of this Church has not been with heresy or variations of Christian doctrine, but with heathenism and Islam.<sup>94</sup>

The reference to a 'Syriac mind' is an essentialist motif difficult to ignore, and is one which cannot be easily reconciled with the overall ethos of *circumstantial difference* more commonly found in the writings of the American Presbyterians. It is worth consideration, however, as it perhaps demonstrates the process of negotiation which is implicitly a part of the construction of these individual missionary narratives. Although the proselytising ethos demands the representation of 'the Oriental' as ultimately similar in human nature to the missionaries themselves, easy explanations of difference located in an essentialist style of representing the Orient seem to be borrowed where proselytisation is not the direct focus of the narrative. It is also interesting to note that he seems to correct himself in the second sentence of the quotation where he proposes that the *principal* reason for the difference in the mode of thought was due to the circumstances of Muslim domination. Thus the 'Syriac mind' was perhaps imagined by Joseph Plumb Cochran as a cultural phenomenon rather than a physical and ontological inability towards reason and systematic logic.

Another voice illustrating the individual variance of opinion amongst the Presbyterians, is that of Edmund Wilson McDowell. One of McDowell's most important roles from the late 1890s onwards was his involvement in attempts to open up a mission to the 'Mountain Nestorians' and the Kurds of the Ottoman Empire. McDowell refers to this field as "an open door"<sup>95</sup>, a frequently observable phrase in the archive expressing great expectation in the hope of the conversion of the Nestorian Christians in particular but also of the aspiration to proselytise the Muslim Kurds. His description of the Mountain region, as was shown in the first section of this chapter, is interestingly nuanced, seeing the Kurds not simply as 'the enemy', as does Benjamin Labaree, but as part of a more complex and integrated social landscape.

Benjamin Labaree, when describing the Kurds at a time just after the aborted siege of Urumia in 1880, referred to them from the perspective of his charges the Christian

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<sup>94</sup> Joseph Plumb Cochran, from a speech delivered in Urumia in 1898 and quoted from Robert E. Speer, "*The Hakim Sahib*" *The Foreign Doctor: a biography of Joseph Plumb Cochran M.D. of Persia* (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1911), 23-4.

<sup>95</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *letter March 2, 1899*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6 (letters out of place - Mountain Work), Letter. 217.

population of the Urumia Plains. His representation of the Kurds portrays them as wild and marauding raiders and little thought is given in his narrative to their own predicament. After the incursions of the Ubayd Allah rebellion of 1880 and upon hearing of a possible alliance between the Ottoman and Persian governments in pursuing “the troublesome chief”,<sup>96</sup> Labaree goes as far as suggesting that if, whilst chasing Ubayd Allah, “they would make thorough work with the various Koordish tribes that infest the border, both Kingdoms would be rid of these terrible pests.”<sup>97</sup> His perspective, as defender of the Christian community, thus produces a style of representation which is hostile to the Kurds and which portrays them in an essentialist light.<sup>98</sup>

In contrast, McDowell’s representation, taken from a report filed under the category ‘Mountain Work’, contradicts that of Benjamin Labaree when describing the Nestorians of Tiari, which he delivers through the anecdotal perspective of a single Syrian village. The Christian village is presented as actively provoking the Kurds, who McDowell describes as ruled by a just and peaceful chief.<sup>99</sup> McDowell’s balanced depiction does much to dispel essentialist notions of the two communities. He then goes on to describe, once again by way of anecdote, a more familiar picture of the balance of power in the Bohtan district.

In one of our villages<sup>100</sup> the chief man, a Koord, came & beat them & in other ways terrorized them & then informed them he wished to buy their farms. They were afraid to refuse him so consented. He placed 7 Krans (\$1:00) in the hand of one man saying this is the price of your farm & then took the money from him as he, being his subject, had no right to it (that seemed to be his argument). He then repeated the process with the others with the same piece of money until he had all

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<sup>96</sup> Benjamin Labaree, Jr., *letter November 4, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter. 85.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* For an account of the Ubayd Allah rebellion see: Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: its origins and development* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 75-101.

<sup>98</sup> This obviously nuances the binary between *essentialist* Anglicans and *circumstantialist* Presbyterians, but my point is that missionary texts were influenced by discursive forces not determined by them. What is intriguing is that where Labaree is not arguing in favour of proselytisation he can revert to what one might call the ‘default’ Orientalist position of essentialism.

<sup>99</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *letter March 2, 1899*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6 (letters out of place - Mountain Work), Letter 217.

<sup>100</sup> By “one of our villages” McDowell is probably referring to one of the villages where the Presbyterians have a ‘native’ pastor with some degree of influence.

their farms & the money too. I have no doubt he could legalize the process in their courts if not by law by the use of the same silver piece. It made me blush to think how successful he would be as a lawyer in some of our courts in America.<sup>101</sup>

Although this narrative is anecdotal, and perhaps merely the repetition of a story he had heard, it is of interest in identifying what McDowell sees as being important and germane to the plight of Christians in the Kurdish mountains. The despotism described is the result of individual avarice and the absence of the rule of law and order, it is not presented as a particular racial or religious propensity. Furthermore, the last line of his story is most intriguing in that he seems to think that the corruption displayed by the Kurdish chief is the same sort of thing as one might find in America and thus perpetrated by a 'Western' Christian. McDowell's portrayal thus expounds a very universalist conception of the nature of sin and evil and a far from idealised depiction of America, and he sums up the situation as regards the opportunities and problems facing the mission to the mountain regions by recommending an even handed policy towards both Syrians and Kurds.<sup>102</sup>

Perhaps the most clear example of an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference*, as previously mentioned in the first section of this chapter, is that of the Rev. Eli T. Allen, writing to the Board of Commissioners of his experiences in 1913, who describes both Kurds and 'Englishmen' as "of one blood".<sup>103</sup> He continues by describing how the virtues of the 'Occidental' are the result of Christianity and that the failings of the 'Oriental' are the result of Islam.<sup>104</sup> Apart from the rather predictable polemic against Islam, what is striking is the perception of an underlying 'sameness' of nature between 'Orientals' and 'Occidentals'. Allen's pronouncement of the universality of the human spirit before God and the brotherhood of mankind does not depart altogether from an Orientalist narrative, however, and he ends his anecdotal thesis by affirming that he is nonetheless on a higher level than his

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<sup>101</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *letter March 2, 1899*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6 (letters out of place - Mountain Work), Letter. 217.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Eli T. Allen, *A Journey to Sulduz and Ushnook, [in lieu of a Personal Report]: June 2nd 1913. Urumia, Persia*. RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968. Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 2: Personal Reports, 1911-1930. Box 4. Folder 6. For a fuller quotation see: section - *An Oriental Realm of 'Mohammedan' Domination*.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

‘Oriental’ audience, but he also explains that this is due to the soundness of the beliefs which he has come to spread and not due to his ontological status as a ‘Westerner’.<sup>105</sup>

The remedy offered by the American Presbyterian Mission to the perceived ‘backwardness’ of the ‘Orient’ was that of proselytisation, but this goal was also accompanied by a tireless effort to educate the entire community. To this end the American Presbyterians established schools for elementary education and two colleges, one teaching secular subjects and open to Muslims and Jews as well as Christians, and another for the theological training of ‘native’ Pastors. The missionary E. W. StPierre writes in an 1890 review of educational work of the rewards which he perceived this system to be reaping for the benefit of the local population. Speaking of the Theological College he gives an insightful impression of the mission strategy:

The College is steadily pushing forward in the discipline it gives to the minds of its sons. New studies are being introduced while old ones constantly improved and then too the mental enlightenment now prevailing all over the Syrian people [due to elementary schools] enables us to receive the young into the College better prepared to benefit by what the College offers.<sup>106</sup>

The allusion to ‘mental enlightenment’ is a clear indicator of a perception of ‘Oriental’ difference as being circumstantial in its nature and points to a belief that Orientals can be productively educated as if they were ‘Occidentals’. He continues by articulating precisely what he considers to have been gained from such a system:

I am glad to witness to a development of “Manhood” in our pupils. There is a great horror manifested at menial dependence. Begging is despised. [...] This nation will not always be known as “beggars” – character is being developed. [...] What the Nestorians most needed was character and that is coming now.<sup>107</sup>

It would, I think, be difficult to find a clearer articulation of the kind of paternalistic Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* which I have been arguing is emblematic of

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> E. W. StPierre, *letter August 1, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6 Letter. 147.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*



the American Presbyterian Mission. Orientals are, within this model, lacking in the qualities of what StPierre calls 'Manhood' because of the environment in which they live. Their weaknesses were perceived as being due to their poverty and lack of education, the influence of a religion that does not possess the living quality of Light, and the influence of a culture that does not teach the civic values of self-sufficiency and honesty which the missionaries referred to as 'Manhood'. Within this world-view they could, however, be delivered from their 'fallen' condition through the various forms of education which the mission offered, because their natures were not locked into a fixed ontological essence but were perceived as malleable.

The perception of the malleability of the individual human character is also expressed well by Mrs J. G. Watson (Jessie Anne Rood), wife of the missionary John Gilchrist Watson, who, writing in 1895, extolls the work of the Syrian convert Mirza Menos in the mountains of Kurdistan:<sup>108</sup>

the half wild disorderly children of the village had been brought to observe the order and discipline of school life, hard though it had been for the teacher. Drinking and gambling were rife, the latter even among the children, but owing to the influence and the many earnest talks of the teacher with the people the evils were to the joy of Mirza Menos seen to be greatly lessened.<sup>109</sup>

This quotation demonstrates an American Presbyterian aspiration to spread their particular approach to life amongst all the peoples of the world, an aspiration which is based upon a perception of the equality of the races to aspire to the apogee of human life in the service of God.

The above analysis has focused upon the meaning ascribed by the American Presbyterian missionaries to the differences thought to separate 'Orientals' from 'Occidentals'. As with the Anglican missionaries, there is a certain level of ambiguity and individual variance within their knowledge production as a group. However, there can also be said to exist a clear consensus of opinion as to the nature of Oriental

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<sup>108</sup> Mirza being the appellation given by the missionaries to their Syrian convert school teachers.

<sup>109</sup> Mrs J. G. Watson, *letter June 19, 1895*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.126. Index, Vol. 11 Letter. 114.

difference which I have characterised as an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference*. There was shown to exist a logical consistency between an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* and a project to proselytise the peoples of the Orient to Protestantism. Nonetheless, despite the logical imperative to view the essential sameness of the human spirit there can be seen occasional recourse to a style of representation which can be characterised as an Orientalism of *essential difference*. These rather sporadic instances are of interest in that they complicate the theoretical model which I have created and point to the mechanisms by which these narratives have been constructed. In this respect missionary narratives can be envisaged as the textual trace of a process of identity positioning in which individuals attempted to place their personal experience within the context of discursive norms. For American Presbyterian missionaries the most important of these was the ethos behind their global proselytising project, but this was not the only norm to which they were subject. Popular and scientific ideas as to the nature of the Orient were also of importance to them, and where these values do not overtly conflict with the proselytising ethos there is room for the uptake of modes of representation which do not necessarily fit logically or neatly with their other pronouncements. On the whole, however, the overwhelming consensus of representation within the corpus of knowledge constituted by their textual output is in accordance with a mode of representation that I have labelled an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference*.

## Chapter four - Agents of Imperialism?

This chapter follows on from the preceding examination of the divergent Orientalisms of the two missions and poses the second research question of this thesis; whether it is meaningful to consider these missionaries to be the agents of imperialism in either a political or a cultural sense. As was discussed in chapter two, much has been written about the impact and consequences of Protestant missionary activity in the Kurdish region and the wider Middle East, but there remains great division in the academic literature as to how we should interpret the missionaries' role in the processes of European imperial expansion throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> While a great deal of attention has been focused upon the perceived political outcomes of missionary activity, much less attention has been given to the narratives which these missionaries themselves constructed to portray the region in which they worked; narratives which position the missionaries relative to both imperial power and the human objects of their missions. This chapter, therefore, will present an analysis of the missionaries' own views as to the role of mission relative to the advancement of a dominant and expansionist 'Western' world. This approach is important because the notion of missionary complicity with imperialism should not be based solely upon their impact and reception in the region but should also be augmented by an understanding of their intention and self-perception. Furthermore, the diversity and individuality of missionary narratives was shown in chapter three to significantly nuance their Orientalist style, and demonstrated that they were capable of writing outside the expectations of an essentialist style of Orientalism. Therefore, if the discourse can give rise to variance in relation to their essentialism then we cannot necessarily assume how it will determine their outlooks with regard to imperialism either.

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<sup>1</sup> Including the more indirect economic expansion and political influence of the United States of America.

#### 4.1 Expressions of imperialism and anti-imperialism within the Anglican Mission

In the first section of this chapter I will look at the writings of the Anglican missionaries of the Assyrian Mission and will explore their formulations concerning the nature and place of imperial power in the region in which they worked. Before commencing with the analysis of Anglican missionary views, however, it will be useful to make a few brief comments about the operational structure of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Church as this is pertinent to the idea of political agency.<sup>2</sup>

Firstly, the mission was always presented by its own publications as a response to repeated requests for assistance from various members of the Old East Syrian Church, and there seems to be much evidence to support this claim.<sup>3</sup> The Reverend Edward Lewis Cutts in his published account of his mission to the Patriarch Mar Shimun described the situation as follows:

In 1868 a formal petition, chiefly from that portion of the Nestorian people which is located in the plain of Oroomiah, reached the late Archbishop of Canterbury, and he put forth an appeal to the Church of England based upon it.<sup>4</sup>

Cutts continues by saying that further petitions followed and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York were "minded to respond to these persistent supplications."<sup>5</sup> Secondly, and despite the fact that the Church of England is a State Church, the activities of the mission were directed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and letters in the archive demonstrate that instructions would always emanate from and requests

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<sup>2</sup> As I demonstrated in chapter two, some historians claim that the mission was an arm of state policy, and I do not think that this is accurate for reasons which will be demonstrated below.

<sup>3</sup> An example of such a petition can be found at the beginning of the Archive in a printed pamphlet produced as an appeal for donations for the training of a medical missionary. *The Spiritual Wants of Asia Minor. Commended and translated by Presbyter George Hormuzd and said to be the words of Mar Shimon* (Proof copy only. London: Barrett, sons & CO, 1879), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 3-8. The archive is in fact dotted with similar petition for aid money to support the mission. See for example: AM-1, 50; AM1, 192; AM-2, 36-9; AM-3, 238; AM-3, 270; AM-15, 158. The above are examples taken as indicative and do not by any means constitute an exhaustive list. For a more comprehensive account of the various petitions made by the Syrian Christians to the Church of England see: Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Lewis Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

would be directed to the Archbishop as the final authority. That is to say there appears to be no direct political control from outside the Church of England over the direction of the mission and its activities. As to funding, this was raised exclusively from private donations, either directly to the Church of England or through the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of the Gospel in foreign parts (SPG) and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). J. F. Coakley describes the mission as “an example of a Victorian missionary society”,<sup>6</sup> and thus a charitable and non-state affair.<sup>7</sup> A good example of this charitable status is related by Coakley who describes how in 1870 an appeal was so unsuccessful in collecting donations that even the most rudimentary of expeditions to the Syrian Christians was impossible.<sup>8</sup> There was an apparent exception to this financial distancing from the British Government in that the British embassy in Tehran contributed £133 to the mission over a four year period, but upon closer inspection this money was in fact donated by the Shah.<sup>9</sup> The mission was therefore, exclusively a Church matter with no evidence of direct state or commercial interference, funding, or direction.

Moving on to the writings of the missionaries themselves, the Reverend George Percy Badger, as previously mentioned, was the first missionary to be sent by the Church of England to the Church of the East in the year 1842. In his published account of that mission Badger was explicit in his warnings as to the dangers of imperialism as conducted through religious conversion, and he articulated this point of view in a sharp rebuke of Roman Catholic missions in the region which, he maintains, were sponsored by the French government.<sup>10</sup> Badger’s work was aimed at an English reading public with an interest in mission which he hoped to sway towards the support of further Anglican mission and can therefore be read as a polemic against any competitors, but his justifications are nonetheless indicative of his views towards the Orient and its potential management. He states that the:

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<sup>6</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Coakley describes the early attempts at mission in 1868 in the following manner: “Some sort of committee was duly formed to examine the petition and draw up an appeal on behalf of the Nestorians.” Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 60.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 66. They collected only £80 at this point according to Coakley who also relates in meticulous detail the various ways in which appeals for funding were conducted throughout the course of the mission’s history and this conveys very well the voluntary and charitable status of the mission. See in particular page 144 - ‘Home Organisation’.

<sup>9</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 120.

<sup>10</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 1, 2.

influence which the representatives of France at Constantinople have exercised in behalf of [the] emissaries from Rome, and their intervention in favour of the proselytes made from the different Christian communities in the Turkish empire, is not kept secret by their own writers.<sup>11</sup>

Badger argues that the effects of this cooperation between a Western Church and an expansionist European power would be destructive. The creation of new proselytised communities, he wrote, had resulted in “the alienation or division of many of their churches and church property, and the consequent depression and impoverishment of the parent body.”<sup>12</sup> The fear seems to have been that schism would weaken the traditional Churches of the Orient and consequently further divide the Oriental Christian community as a whole. In addition to these undesirable consequences Badger argued that proselytisation to Roman Catholicism would have “an undoubted tendency to loosen the dependence of a whole class of rayahs upon the justice and protection of the Porte, and to augment a pernicious foreign influence”.<sup>13</sup> This demonstrates an ethical point of view which is perhaps as far from being imperialistic as one could imagine, Badger was not only decrying foreign influence as being pernicious but was advocating the judicial and political sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>14</sup>

Badger also criticised the political machinations of an expansionist Russia for its interest in claiming protectorate status over Greek and Armenian Christians within the Ottoman Empire through proselytisation to Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>15</sup> By stating this Badger was pointing directly to what Edward Said would later call the ‘creation of an interest’ and in so doing was implicitly distancing himself from such an ideology of imperial expansion.<sup>16</sup> He outlines that an Anglican mission must work to reinvigorate the Old East Syrian Church through an ethos of assistance and not of authoritarian control, so that it may stand as an ecclesiastically independent entity. An important

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, as Coakley points out, the policy of the Anglican mission explicitly recommended that missionaries should encourage the Syrian community to continue “to be peaceable subjects of the civil powers.” Coakley, *The Church of the East and The Church of England*, 70.

<sup>15</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 1, 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> I am paraphrasing Said here. See: Said, *Orientalism*, 100.

aspect of Badger's criticism of the other foreign missions was that the proselytisation of 'Orientals' to a 'Western' religion was an utterly negative method of engagement with the region.<sup>17</sup> His instructions from the SPCK also emphasised this principle by underlining the importance of the ecclesiastical independence of the Oriental Churches, these orders stated that the Anglican Church hoped to see the Eastern Churches "restored to a flourishing condition as branches of the True Vine."<sup>18</sup> The significance of this statement is that it represents an official acceptance of the legitimacy of the Old East Syrian Church as the appropriate institution for the salvation Orientals.

Badger saves his greatest criticism, however, for the work of the American Presbyterians who were actively trying to convert individuals from within the Nestorian community. His objection to their work was that their ethos and doctrine, with its reliance upon rationalism and the relative freedom of the individual to interpret the Gospels, would induce an atomisation of Eastern society.<sup>19</sup> The basis for this objection to the work of the American Presbyterians is related to his Orientalist preconceptions, as examined in the previous chapter, that the 'Oriental mind' was not pre-disposed to what Badger describes as a 'republicanism in religion'.<sup>20</sup> In fact his representation of the constitutional inability of Orientals towards rationalism is so forcefully articulated that he describes the work of the American missionaries as being even more dangerous than the old heresies of Nestorianism, stating that the "leaven [of evangelical Protestant teaching] will sooner or later taint the Eastern Churches with a latitudinarianism and rationalism far more pernicious than the errors and superstitions with which they have so long defaced the pure truths of the Gospel".<sup>21</sup> Badger's alternative to this policy of direct proselytisation to a 'Western' form of religion envisioned a revitalised Old East Syrian Church which, cleansed of Nestorian heresy, would rise up in a return to a lost golden age of

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<sup>17</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 1, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, xv. This is a High Church Anglican expression which alludes to the concept of Branch theory and the idea of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church constituted by the 'branches' of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, and in this case also the Orthodox Church of the East. See: "Branch Theory of the Church," *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition) online version, Edited by F. L. Cross, E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 1, 10.

<sup>20</sup> See: Chapter three, section - *Restoration and Essential Difference*. Pages 131-2.

<sup>21</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 1, 11.

Oriental Christian proselytism.<sup>22</sup> To support this thesis he states that “there seems little hope of the conversion of the heathen until the native churches shall have risen from sleep, and again trimmed their lamps with a zeal and love such as were exhibited in the early Nestorian missionaries”.<sup>23</sup> This is clearly not imperialism in a political sense but it does display a religious hope for a kind of Christian imperium of Orthodox beliefs, or rather Catholic belief in the broader sense of the term.<sup>24</sup> Badger outlined this hopes as follows:

And when these Churches [Nestorian, Chaldean, Jacobite, and Papal Syrian] shall have become one in faith and charity, then and then only, may we hope that from them will go forth a fervent zeal and love, as in by-gone days, which through the power of GOD shall reduce the followers of the false prophet to the sway of the Crucified One, and gather the heathen Yezeedees into the fold of the Shepherd of Israel.<sup>25</sup>

I think that it would be wrong to read this sentiment as an aspiration to imperialism in the sense of a physical conquest of the Orient by Occidentals, the hope is simply a religious desire for the saving of souls. Badger’s acceptance of an ‘Oriental realm’ and of the ‘Oriental mind’ as ontological realities demonstrate his Orientalism, but this does not necessarily mean that he felt that the Orient should be conquered and administered by the ‘West’. Certainly a link can be made between Orientalism and imperialism, but it does not follow that all Orientalist thought and action constitutes the creation of an ‘interest’ for the purposes of a political imperialism or colonisation.<sup>26</sup> There is in this statement of faith no call for the exercise of ‘Western’ domination of the ‘Orient’, rather, it expresses the hope that a specifically Oriental Christian belief can be assisted to spread over a predominantly non-Christian ‘Orient’. Furthermore, the lack of coercion implicit in his plan makes it difficult to interpret this project as a form of cultural imperialism in the sense of the direct imposition of cultural values. Equally, it is clear that the cultural form of Christianity

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>24</sup> As opposed to Roman Catholic beliefs.

<sup>25</sup> Badger, *The Nestorians and their rituals* vol. 2, 359.

<sup>26</sup> For Said’s claim see: Said, *Orientalism*, 100. See also: chapter one, section - *Missionaries in the Context of Imperialism*.



which Badger wished to propagate was in his view an Oriental one, and that Badger was hoping to shield the Orient from Occidental cultural penetration as he perceives it to be harmful to the stability of the region. From these assertions, of the negative effects of political imperialism upon the desired goal of religious mission, it seems clear that Badger's aspirations were not particularly imperialistic; there is in fact, as with Joseph Conrad, a distinctly anti-imperialist sentiment to his rhetoric.

A peculiarity of this project, however, was that the Anglicans were faced with a dilemma in that the Old East Syrian Church, or the Nestorian Church as it was more commonly referred to by the Anglicans at that time, was considered by them to be heretical in its doctrine.<sup>27</sup> Badger was the first English missionary in a position to evaluate this problem and his assessment was as follows:

The question ... is whether the so-called Nestorians of the present day hold with the heresy attributed to Nestorius. My own solemn conviction, after a careful study of their standard theology, is that they do not.<sup>28</sup>

So, Badger believed that the Syrians had been unfairly labelled as heretics through their association with the name of Nestorius, and that their theology had remained orthodox – if impoverished. This is an important point because it demonstrates that the Anglicans were prepared to listen to and negotiate with the hierarchy of the Old East Syrian Church and to allow them to decide their own fate rather than dictating it to them.

The Reverend E. L. Cutts, writing in 1878, however, articulates a more nuanced conceptualisation of the interplay between religious mission and political power. In chapter three I demonstrated that Cutts displayed a less essentialist Orientalism than that of Badger, and that he advocated an English style of education for the Syrian community. His eagerness to educate Orientals was, however, somewhat balanced by his desire to maintain the integrity of the Nestorian Church against the proselytising activities of the American missionaries.

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<sup>27</sup> See: chapter one, section - *The Two Missions of this Study*.

<sup>28</sup> George Percy Badger, *Pamphlet* (n.d. probably 1879), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 51.

In relation to the connection between matters political and matters religious Cutts informs his readers of the relationship between his mission and the great political question of the day, the so called 'Eastern Question'.<sup>29</sup> As his book was published in 1878 it speaks to an English public anxious at recent Russian encroachments upon the Ottoman Empire and Persia and thus involves the question of imperialism in a direct manner. Cutts suggests that 'the Question' is a political matter, and thus beyond the scope of his expertise, but he nonetheless hastens to give an opinion as to a proposed management of the political relationship between Europe and the Orient. He starts with a clarification, that the subject which he studied during his travels in Kurdistan, and thus his area of expertise, "was the condition of the Christians [living] under the rule of Turkey and Persia",<sup>30</sup> and that consequently his focus is a limited one. The Christians, he explains, are oppressed in both countries and it is "difficult to see how [their oppression] is to be amended",<sup>31</sup> nonetheless, he elaborates "two modes of applying a remedy"<sup>32</sup> to this thorny problem.

Firstly, there is what he calls "the Russian mode", the idea of the complete conquest of Muslim lands and the substitution of Islamic rule for "a Christian government".<sup>33</sup> This image must have had considerable resonance with British readers as Cutts' work was published in the wake of the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78, a war which saw considerable Russian territorial gains in Ottoman territory. Secondly, there is what he describes as the "English mode"<sup>34</sup> of dealing with the Orient, whereby the existing Muslim governments are supported from collapse and are consequently influenced through ambassadorial pressure.<sup>35</sup> The 'Russian' mode he refers to as "the Crusading principle"<sup>36</sup> which he curtly dismisses as having "manifest objections."<sup>37</sup> The 'English' mode he extols as a non-interventionist strategy which would be improved by having a "larger number of consuls scattered over the

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<sup>29</sup> This refers to the hot political item of the day, the European political management of the Orient and in particular the Ottoman Empire and Persia. The countries most involved in this were the Great Powers of Britain, France and Russia but also included the interests of Austria, the United States (to a lesser degree) and the emergent power of Germany. See: A. L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* revised edition (London: Longman, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> Cutts, *Christians Under the Crescent in Asia*, 339.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

country”<sup>38</sup> than existed at the time of writing. Cutts was obviously opposed to colonisation or direct imperial rule of the Islamic Orient but seems, nonetheless, far less reticent than Badger to invoke diplomatic influence. It should be borne in mind, however, that Badger was not opposing political influence over the Orient *per se*, but rather he was denouncing the connection which proselytisation invoked between religious mission and political agency. Cutts, however, has gone further than Badger by connecting religious mission, in his concern for the condition of the Christians under Muslim rule, with the idea of ambassadorial pressure. Furthermore, his point of view is in line with the political stance of the British government in attempting to use the Ottoman Empire to block Russian imperial expansion towards India. Nonetheless, the protection of the ‘Oriental’ Christians in this process is not described by Cutts as an ‘interest’ by which political advantage may be sought, but is instead a moral obligation which, as will be shown later in this section, actually jeopardised that political concern. In this light it is difficult to see the Anglican Mission in terms of the creation of an ‘interest’ for the purposes of political gain, and, furthermore, the insistence in his narrative upon non-proselytisation and ecclesiastical independence underlines a concern to maintain the region as a distinctly Oriental space.<sup>39</sup>

The clarity of this distinction, between the religious and the political, is clouded, however, when Cutts’ speaks of his preoccupation with the dangers posed by the Roman Catholic Church and its missionaries. An important argument in Cutts’ narrative is the perceived role of the Anglican Church to counter “the pretensions of Rome to universal sovereignty”.<sup>40</sup> He therefore asserts that:

the great English religious instinct of opposition to the designs of Rome, and the great political question of the day “the Eastern Question,”<sup>41</sup> combine to give us a great and growing interest in the Christianity of the East, and incline us to give favourable ear to the overtures which are made to us from thence.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

In this quotation there can be seen an ulterior 'interest' which is served by the Assyrian Mission. However, the 'interest' is not of a political significance but of a religious one, and it is not power over the Orient but opposition to the power of the Roman Catholic Church which is the goal of this proposed strategy. I have already pointed out that Cutts overtly connects a religious issue with a political one, but interestingly it is not the Christian missionaries who are presented as the agents of imperialism in the conquest of the Orient, it is instead the political agents of imperialism who are called upon in this hypothetical stratagem to serve the 'interests' of the Anglican Mission in its desire to 'preserve' the Orient from the advances of Rome. It is an Orientalist view but, rather interestingly, the connection asserted by Edward Said that Christian missions serve the machinations of imperialism is completely reversed. Instead we can see aspects of culture, religious belief in this instance, expressed in an Orientalist framework and influencing the priorities of political agents against their own political interests; and perhaps this highlights the unconscious workings of discursive forces over the more conscious and deliberate projects of formal empires.

The proposed plan as articulated by Cutts was thus to send out a small group of Anglican clergymen who would initiate a process where the Nestorians would ultimately educate themselves in their own creed through the medium of their own language. In Cutts' words it was a scheme to "help them to educate and elevate themselves",<sup>43</sup> and is an aim far from the baser 'interests' of political imperialism and is lacking in any desire to colonise the Orient. Perhaps it could be argued that this religious project has its roots in an imperialist desire to find interests through which Britain could influence the conduct of the Ottoman Empire, but that seems to be far from Cutts' intention. The sentiment is certainly anti-Islamic, but only an analysis which conflates Christianity with the Occident can unambiguously make the case that the desire to convert the Orient to Christianity necessarily represents a 'Western' imperialist agenda.

After Cutts' journey to the Nestorian Church and his evaluation of the possibilities of an Anglican Mission, the Archbishop of Canterbury made it clear in no uncertain terms that the mission should be a non-political one. Archbishop Tait thus wrote in

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

his instructions to the first permanent missionary appointed, the Reverend Wahl, that he “should on every occasion make it clear that [his] mission has no political object whatever and that [he was] altogether precluded from taking any part in political action or discussion.”<sup>44</sup> This is emphasised in an 1886 correspondence found in the Anglican archive from the British Vice Consul in Van, H. W. Barnham, to Archbishop Benson. Barnham articulates his concern that the Mar Shimun, the spiritual and temporal leader of the Nestorians, was “impressed with the belief that his people [were] under the special protection of the English Gov<sup>t</sup>.”<sup>45</sup> Barnham continues by saying that he pointed out to the Mar Shimun that the missionaries’ “presence gave the Nestorians no new political rights, & that, having in view the suspicion with which [the mission] was regarded by the Turkish Authorities, the missionaries would have to be most careful not to exceed the terms of their instruction.”<sup>46</sup> The perception by the local Christian communities of the direct relationship between religious institutions and imperial power had been commented upon some years earlier by the British Vice-Consul Clayton. Reporting to the British Foreign Secretary in 1882, Clayton remarked:

I know that the general opinion has prevailed among the Christians in that part of the world, that if they become members of the English Church, they would ipso facto become British subjects and entitled to the protection of the British Government.<sup>47</sup>

It is interesting to speculate that much of the accusations of missionary complicity with imperial power derives from these local perceptions and expectations. Barnham’s care to disavow any such connection was affirmed by the British Ambassador to Istanbul (1886-1891), the Right Honourable William Arthur White, who in a letter to the Archbishop makes it clear that he was not prepared to become embroiled in the sponsorship of the subjects of the Ottoman Porte. He writes that:

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<sup>44</sup> Archbishop Tait, *Letter to Rev. Rudolf Wahl* (August 1882), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 173. Note that even discussion was precluded.

<sup>45</sup> H. W. Barnham, *Letter to Archbishop Benson* (November, 1886) Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-2, 368.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* The British consular agents also continued to discourage the Archbishop from pursuing the mission. See: Vice Consul Abbot, *Letter to Archbishop Benson* (February, 1885), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-2, 57. See also: H. W. Barnham, *Letter to Archbishop Benson* (November, 1886) Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-2, 367.

<sup>47</sup> Coakley, *The Church of England and the Church of the East*, 83.

the Ottoman Government very naturally objects to any Foreign Power assuming the protectorate of any special race or community of Turkish subjects, and it is a delicate matter, and one of a kind in which it is not desirable that either our consuls, or Her Majesty's Embassy should assume a system of regular interference.<sup>48</sup>

It would seem from these correspondences that neither the Archbishop nor the British Foreign Office looked upon the mission to the Assyrian Church as politically useful, in fact it seems that it was something of a burden to the Embassy rather than an 'interest'. Coakley also comments that the Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, concurred with White's point of view and requested of the Archbishop of Canterbury "that the missionaries should cease using the consuls to ventilate the Syrians' grievances."<sup>49</sup> It was during this period, the mid-1880s, that the Anglican Mission to the Assyrian Church became operational on a permanent basis, and thus its establishment against strong diplomatic opposition highlights the disjuncture which must have existed between the political agents of the British Empire and those of the Anglican mission.

The Anglican mission was from its outset based very firmly upon the ideal of ecumenical union, that is to say that the Old East Syrian Church was envisaged as a partner with the Anglican Church rather than subordinate to it. An 1884 pamphlet which was circulated in Anglican Churches appealing for funds describes the mission's aims as follows:

The object in view has not been to bring over these so-called Nestorian Christians to the Communion of the English Church, but rather to strengthen and encourage them in developing the work of their own Church.<sup>50</sup>

This standpoint is very much in line with the position of the Oxford Movement which sought the ecumenical union of the Anglican Church with that of the Roman Catholic

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<sup>48</sup> William Arthur White, *Letter to Archbishop Benson* (December, 1886) Countersigned by Stafford Northcote 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Iddesleigh, Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 126.

<sup>50</sup> *Pamphlet appealing for funds* (July 1884), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 192.

and Eastern Orthodox Churches. These ecumenical ideals were stretched by Athelstan Riley to include a fourth Church, the Church of the East. In a letter to Archbishop Edward Benson, Riley locates the Patriarchal seat of this Eastern Church as being that of Antioch which he describes as “the Catholic Mother of the poor Assyrians”.<sup>51</sup> What is evident from this method of missionary activity is that it does not assume the kind of authority over the Nestorian Church as does the Presbyterian mission, which claimed through its proselytising objectives to supersede the Old Church. The particular method of mission was, consequently, an attempt to teach the clergy of the Old Church to read and write in their own Syriac language and to become more familiar with the liturgies and theological works of their own Church.<sup>52</sup> This aim is far removed from any claim to authority over the ‘Nestorians’ as it was dependent upon acceptance and approval by the existing hierarchy of the Syrian Church. As such, and notwithstanding the representative style of Orientalism so evident in their writing, it is difficult to see in this aspiration a desire to extend imperial power.

Nonetheless, Britain’s political rivals in the region did not pass over opportunities to make political capital out of any apparent connection between religious mission and political subversion. At the start of formal mission an article appeared in the *Times* of London which has been retained within the Anglican missionary archive indicating its perceived importance to the activities of the mission. The accusation made in the Russian newspaper *Novoe Vremya* and reproduced in *Times* states that:

The *Novoe Vremya* has discovered a serious attempt on the part of England to extend her political influence to the Nestorian Christians (who have hitherto enjoyed Russian protection) near the Russian frontiers, by means of constant propaganda, zealously carried on in Persia by English missionaries. This discovery is connected with the news of the dispatch of two English missionaries, Messrs. Brown and Maclean, to Uvia [Urmia] in Azerbaijan, the center of the Nestorians;

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<sup>51</sup> Athelstan Riley, *letter to Archbishop* (1887), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 99. Coakley also speaks of Riley’s view of the Assyrian Church belonging to the See of Antioch.

<sup>52</sup> This was somewhat complicated by the fact that the spoken Syriac was considerably different to the Old Syriac/Neo-Aramaic in which the Old manuscripts of the Church were written. Nonetheless, the Anglican missionaries attempted to faithfully reproduce these manuscripts in printed version for the Syrian Church.

and the *Novoe Vremya* counsels the adoption of counteracting precautions on Russia's part.<sup>53</sup>

The *Novoe Vremya* article seems not to be founded on actual evidence of political agitation but upon an assumption of the connection between the Anglican Church and the British State as something analogous to that of the Russian State with its State Church. Nonetheless, the incident serves to demonstrate how attitudes about the complicity of religious mission with imperial power can be influenced by unfounded accusations of political intrigue which may nonetheless gain currency in the popular imagination.

This depiction of the Anglican mission was strongly opposed by Athelstan Riley who was a keen promoter of the Anglican mission, and his justifications and explanations as to the purpose of the mission were immensely influential in the articulation of its ethos.<sup>54</sup> Riley, as has been discussed in chapter three, expressed a marked tendency towards an Orientalism of *essential difference* where the ontological character of Orientals precluded their productive adoption of 'Western' practices and modes of thought.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, rather than perceiving the mission as the pursuit of a political 'interest' which would benefit British imperial power, Riley describes it as a moral obligation. In a *Report on the foundations of the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission to the Assyrian Church in 1886*, Riley describes the motivation for the mission as follows:

great exertions were made by his Grace to re-establish the Assyrian Mission upon a permanent and satisfactory basis, it being felt that the honour of the Church of England was more or less at stake, and that the devotion of the Assyrians to the English Church after nearly half a century of disappointment, deserved an adequate response.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cutting from the *Times* newspaper (n.d. filed for early 1886), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-2, 284.

<sup>54</sup> The Archive of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Church is dotted with numerous speeches and pamphlets written by Riley articulating his views of the mission and its goals. As was stated in chapter three Riley is referred to by Coakley as the mission's chief publicist. See: Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> See chapter three, section - *Restoration and Essential Difference*.

<sup>56</sup> Athelstan Riley, *Report on the foundation of the Archbishop's Mission*, AM-2, 372.



Two years later in his published appraisal of the progress and prospects of the mission Riley outlined the object of the Assyrian Mission as simply that of “raising a fallen Oriental Church”<sup>57</sup> and asserted that the achievement of this object should involve a minimum of cultural interference. He continues by describing the approach undertaken at the mission station of Urumia as follows:

Food and other habits of life are studiously kept Oriental: all imitations of Western manners and customs is strictly forbidden to the scholars, the policy of the Mission being to make the natives take a pride in their own national customs – as a rule admirably suited to their circumstances and their country – and to look down upon those who ape European dress and manners, because they think it gives them an air of authority over their neighbours. The Persian Assyrians from their long contact with Presbyterianism (a tendency to Westernize is a strong feature of the American Mission) are the chief offenders.<sup>58</sup>

One can see from this quotation that Riley’s Orientalism which highlights the *essential difference* which separates ‘Easterners’ from ‘Westerners’ overlaps with, and perhaps inspires, a kind of cultural sensitivity which is opposed to ideas of political imperialism or the kind of imposition of ‘Western’ culture which is commonly associated with cultural imperialism.

In a personal and seemingly candid letter to the Archbishop, Riley’s evaluation of the situation in the eastern Ottoman Empire as regards foreign missions places those missions into two camps. On the one side there are the Russian and French missions which he describes as “having a more or less political significance”,<sup>59</sup> and on the other the Anglican mission which he argues “has no direct connection with politics.”<sup>60</sup> By omission one may assume that he considers the American mission to be similarly non-political in its nature as a non-state Protestant organisation. While Riley presents the Assyrian Mission as an essentially non-political concern he does nonetheless nuance his standpoint in this letter by admitting an indirect political significance to the mission which could not be avoided. Orientals, he states, “cannot

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<sup>57</sup> Athelstan Riley, *Progress and Prospects of the Archbishop’s Mission*, G3200 3.12, 39.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 29-30.

<sup>59</sup> Riley, *Letter to Archbishop* (1886), AM-2, 334.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*.

distinguish between Church and Nation”<sup>61</sup> and therefore all gratitude towards the Church of England would also be gratitude to the English nation.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, he continues by saying that in educating the Syrians the mission would also empower them and necessarily alter the balance of power between the Ottoman State and its Nestorian subjects.<sup>63</sup> It was therefore, according to Riley, the responsibility of the Mission to “inculcate the duty of submission to lawful authority and the [regional] ‘powers that be.’”<sup>64</sup> He points out, however, that this policy of non-interference in political matters has its limits, and “occasions must continually arise in a distant province so atrociously misgoverned as Hakkiari where no European with any self-respect could support the government.”<sup>65</sup> In this quotation Riley is referring to the personal and moral obligation of missionaries to report abuses against the Christian communities they served to the diplomatic representatives of the British Empire, and thus a connection is established between mission and political intervention.

It should perhaps also be mentioned that the very existence of a mission in the Ottoman territories was in some part the result of the political and military dominance of the European Powers, particularly after the treaty of Berlin in 1878.<sup>66</sup> As Riley puts it in a personal correspondence with the Archbishop, the Ottoman government was “powerless to prevent clergy from residing in the country”<sup>67</sup> and that he presumed “H. M. Government [would] not repudiate the responsibility of protecting British subjects in the exercise of their treaty rights and of protecting the Christian subjects of the Porte from punishment on account of the exercise of these rights.”<sup>68</sup> It is more difficult to see the political neutrality of the mission in the light of such language, but it should also be considered that Riley is talking from the point of view of the protection of what in this day would be called human rights and not in terms of the protection of political interests. It is certain that in such a situation Riley is overlooking the sovereignty of the Ottoman state to administer its own territories but his Orientalism allows him to see the Ottoman Porte as an uncivilized government

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> For the 1878 Treaty of Berlin and its connection with the ‘Eastern Question’, see: Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 58-9.

<sup>67</sup> Riley, *Letter to Archbishop* (1886), AM-2, 334.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

which needs to be coerced into 'doing the right thing'. This does not, however, mean that the British Embassy in Constantinople welcomed this obligation to coerce the Ottoman government and, as has been shown above, there is every reason to believe that they actively wished to avoid such a politically negative task. Therefore, to read this relationship as an example of the collaboration of religious mission with political power and imperial interests is to oversimplify the situation.

The attempt at a non-political policy was also adopted by the Assyrian Mission on the other side of the border in Persian territory. In his pamphlet, *Progress and Prospects*, Riley states that it was:

the rule of the Mission to interfere as little as possible with the relations between the Government and the Christian subjects of the Shah; and, when grave and undoubted wrong [had] been done, its method of seeking redress [was] by means of friendly and informal representations.<sup>69</sup>

This gives the impression that any call to diplomatic representation was a response to the moral obligation felt by the missionaries to protect their co-religionists and not the more cynical creation of a pretext upon which political leverage could be exacted.

An important part of Riley's defence of the rights of the Old East Syrian Church against a perceived Muslim oppression seems to have been his concern to remove an important motivation for Syrians to seek the protection of other 'Western' powers through the act of conversion. In an 1884 report he relates of the Syrians of Persia that:

We cannot interfere with the rule under which they live, but the clergy that are sent out to minister to their spiritual necessities should at least be able to extend towards the Old Assyrians the same protection as is afforded to their converts by the French and American Missionaries, and this much I think they have the right to expect.<sup>70</sup>

The kind of protection to which Riley is referring is that of Ambassadorial pressure upon the Muslim governments to check the imbalance of temporal power between

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<sup>69</sup> Riley, *Progress and Prospects of the Archbishop's Mission*, G3200 3.12, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Riley, *Report of Mr Athelstan Riley, M. A. 1884*, AM-1, 320.

Christians and Muslims which existed within their realms. In this respect, a particularly important issue to Riley was the dominance of the Kurdish tribes over the Christian communities in both Ottoman and Persian territory. In one of his earlier pamphlets calling for the establishment of a permanent mission Riley refers to the Kurds as a “Mohammedan race”<sup>71</sup> and expresses a particular concern for “the appropriation of Christian villages by the Kurdish chiefs, and the consequent eviction of the unfortunate villagers, [after which] their churches [would be] turned into mosques.”<sup>72</sup> It would seem difficult for a conscientious Christian missionary not to have felt an obligation to appeal to political authority in such a context. Furthermore, the appeal is not for an invasion of the Orient by the ‘Western’ powers nor even for an abrogation of local law but is instead an appeal for the application of the law of the land as it was theoretically supposed to exist.<sup>73</sup> As such this does not seem to be an imperialist urge but rather a perceived moral obligation to defend the weak by whatever means was available.<sup>74</sup> In this context Riley, writing in 1889 at the end of a decade of unrest in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, mentions the mission’s obligation to the Syrian community.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps alluding to the memory of the 1843 Bedr Khan massacres, he states that:

the Patriarch and the Mattran [...] have made it a kind of condition that at least one of our priests should reside in Turkey; the presence of even one European amongst them being a protection from great disasters which are always hanging over them.<sup>76</sup>

The picture thus presented is that of a Christian community on the brink of extinction which requires the protection of the Muslim government which, in turn, can only be relied upon if prompted into action by the dominant ‘Western’ powers. The relationship of the Anglican Mission to ‘Western’ imperial power is thus extremely ambiguous. On the one hand, Riley wishes to distance himself from political power

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<sup>71</sup> Riley, *Report on the Foundation of the Archbishop’s Mission*, AM-2, 375.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Particularly in respect to the Tanzimat reforms of the Ottoman Porte 1839-76.

<sup>74</sup> This is a concern which is not unfamiliar to the present-day reader, how does one fulfil moral obligation whilst maintaining absolute political neutrality in a complex world? The current debate on Syria perhaps being a prime example.

<sup>75</sup> After the suppression of Shaykh Ubayd Allah of Nehri in 1880 the border regions continued to degrade in terms of law and order due to the central government’s inability to police the region and the absence of a powerful local leader. See: McDowell, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 53-59.

<sup>76</sup> Riley, *Progress and Prospects of the Archbishop’s Mission*, G3200 3.12, 20.

and his object is certainly not the furtherance of British political interests. On the other, his moral obligation to prevent massacre and oppression requires that he appeal to Ambassadorial pressure. My evaluation of such a narrative is that it cannot meaningfully be considered as an aspiration to political imperialism as it does not further any stated or implicit political 'interest'. Furthermore with regard to cultural imperialism Riley's Orientalist rhetoric is not straight-forward as it involves the protection of the Orient from 'Western' cultural penetration, an aspiration which would at face value appear to be somewhat anti-imperialist. Thus an Orientalism of *essential difference* leads rather counter-intuitively to a policy of apparent cultural sensitivity. What is interesting here is that Riley's anti-imperialism, his insistence on the cultural integrity of an Oriental realm, is part of a process which disempowers the putative 'Oriental' through a representative style which both essentialises the Syrian community and silences it by presenting it in terms of a 'Western' self-understanding.<sup>77</sup> In this more nuanced sense Riley's narrative portrayal of the Syrian community fits precisely into the definition of cultural imperialism as a more broadly perceived process which validates a 'Western' self-understanding at the expense of the 'Oriental other,' but is simultaneously the antithesis of cultural imperialism perceived as a sustained project to propagate the 'West' as a cultural entity.

Riley's culturally non-interventionist stance is perhaps most graphically illustrated in his opposition to the American Presbyterian mission's policy of direct proselytisation and the 'Westernization' of 'Orientals'. As was shown in Chapter three, Riley criticised the American mission for treating Orientals "as if they were Westerns"<sup>78</sup> and of failing to understand the *essential difference* which permanently separated Orientals from Occidentals.<sup>79</sup> Riley seems to have been particularly incensed by the fact that the American missionaries had rather impertinently adopted the use of the term 'English' to refer to themselves. In an address to the Wolverhampton Church Congress which is reproduced as a pamphlet for the purposes of procuring donations he stated that:

For over half a century the name of England and of England's Church  
has been connected with those Western sectarians who strive by

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<sup>77</sup> The Nestorians are represented in terms of a restored community, restored that is from a 'Western' image of what the Old East Syrian Church used to be.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-7.

<sup>79</sup> See chapter three, section - *Restoration and Essential Difference*.

every means in their power to tear down and destroy the walls of those little Oriental Zions, which have kept securely the faith of Christ amidst infidel invasions and awful persecutions, which would have swept most Western communities from off the face of the earth, connected with those sectarians who strive beyond all to harass and weaken the great Catholic Church of the East, or Orthodox Eastern communion, which some who judge only by hearsay, or by an external prejudiced survey, call a “dead Church.” In truth, it is a vast dead weight of faith and religion which neither Turks nor Persians, Asiatic barbarians, civilized conquerors from Arabia – no, nor yet Satan and all his angels, have been able to overturn.<sup>80</sup>

Riley’s hostility to the American missionaries seems implacable and he represents their work as naively destroying the safeguards of tradition upon which he believes the ‘Oriental mind’ relies for its moral support.<sup>81</sup> In opposition to this approach, Riley’s own stance is that of the preservation and restoration of Oriental forms of religious expression against the advances of a pernicious ‘Western’ cultural influence. He sums up his opposition in a published report on the progress of the mission as follows:

in our work of saving the old native Church we are in absolute antagonism to [the Presbyterians]; we are building up what they have succeeded to a great extent in pulling down. Nothing can mitigate this antagonism, or prevent the encounter of these rival interests.<sup>82</sup>

The Anglican approach in contrast was minimalist in its intervention, seeking to maintain ‘Oriental’ social structures and religious institutions, and to avoid recourse as far as was possible to political power in the defense of their ‘Oriental’ protégés. The degree to which this non-interference was practiced by the Anglican Mission is emphasised by Riley in an 1887 correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury:

the Anglican Mission professedly leaves untouched all that is not contrary to the Faith of the Universal Church, even if not in entire

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<sup>80</sup> Athelstan Riley, *The Assyrian Church*, G3200 3.07, 5-6. The punctuation here is a little bizarre but it is perhaps an attempt to reflect the delivery of a speech.

<sup>81</sup> Riley, *The Assyrian Church*, G3200 3.07, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Riley, *Progress and Prospects of the Archbishop’s Mission*, G3200 3.12, 35.

accordance with Anglican feeling and practice, this being the only sound basis of work.<sup>83</sup>

The meaning of the phrase “all that is not contrary to the Faith of the Universal Church”,<sup>84</sup> is a reference to the perceived heresy of the Nestorian Church, and Riley’s evaluation of this heretical nature is somewhat more severe than that of Badger:

Their ancient theological treaties are undoubtedly tainted with heresy, and although they are at present too ignorant to hold Nestorian doctrines intelligently, still ignorance will not purge heresy, and as a church they refuse to this day to employ orthodox language by objecting to the title “Theotokos,” or “Mother of God,” and using the expression “Two Persons,” in speaking of the Nature of Christ. They habitually speak of the great heresiarch as “Saint Nestorius,” and the popular estimation puts him at least on the level of the Holy Apostles.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, Riley underlines the seriousness of these forms of speech in terms of the doctrinal principles they represent, and in relation to complete ecumenical union with the Anglican Church he states in his Wolverhampton address that:

There can be no compromise in matters concerning the truth of our blessed Lord’s Incarnation, that truth which the Catholic Church has fenced and guarded by unalterable formulas. [...] we are in danger of forgetting that [the Nestorians] were so separated from the Catholic Church for terrible and soul-destroying heresies which cut at the very root of the Christian Faith.<sup>86</sup>

Nonetheless, despite this concern for the heretical nature of the Old East Syrian Church Riley still held, rather paradoxically, that it was the legitimate institution for

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<sup>83</sup> Athelstan Riley, *Letter to the Archbishop* (1887), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 100.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Athelstan Riley, *Assyrian Christians: Report of Mr. Athelstan Riley, M. A. 1884*, Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-1, 319.

<sup>86</sup> Athelstan Riley, *The Assyrian Church. By Mr. Athelstan Riley. A Paper read at the Wolverhampton Church Congress, October 1887*, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.07, 4.

the salvation of the Syrian community. It was hoped that the Syrians would in time realise the error of their ways but it was also emphasised that the Anglican understanding would not be enforced upon the Nestorian Church. Once again this highlights the Anglican mission's concern to maintain the ecclesiastical independence of the Old East Church and consequently to maintain the sovereignty of an 'Oriental' institution. The difference in methods adopted between the Anglicans and the American Presbyterians had, in Riley's view, a corresponding effect upon recourse to political power. His argument is that the American Presbyterians' readiness to involve themselves in controversial acts of proselytism, not least the conversion of Muslims, put them in a situation in which they were bound to defend the nascent proselyte communities who had no traditional structures of authority by which they could represent themselves. Thus Riley describes in *Progress and Prospects* the American missionaries as troublesome to all parties involved. He states that:

The policy of the American missionaries is to interfere perpetually, and not always justly, with the relations between the Government and its Christian subjects, [and is] a policy of which complaints are continually made by Her Majesty's representatives in Turkey and Persia.<sup>87</sup>

Riley's imperialist credentials are thus difficult to evaluate, he advocates non-intervention in political and cultural matters but feels a moral obligation to report abuses to the British Embassy. It might be suggested that it is this use of British political influence, rather than appealing directly to the Ottoman government, which makes such an action imperialist but it should also be borne in mind that it was the correct protocol for ex-patriots to address their concerns through their embassies. Riley's portrayal of the situation makes it clear that he aspired to be politically neutral and to insulate the Syrians from cultural 'contamination', but at the same time he understood that the mission could not be entirely divorced from matters political.

The views of the Reverend Arthur John Maclean, as expressed in the letters and reports found in the archive of the Archbishop's Mission and roughly corresponding to the same period as those of Riley, closely parallels Riley's evaluation of the relationship between religious mission and empire. Maclean is, however, somewhat

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<sup>87</sup> Riley, *Progress and Prospects*, G3200 3.12, 12.



more forgiving in his assessment of the heretical status of the Old Church than is Riley, and states in an introductory account of the Syrian Christians aimed at a knowledgeable lay audience that in his opinion:

the doctrine on the Incarnation which they convey under their peculiar and unorthodox language does not appear to be inconsistent with the decrees of the Council of Ephesus, and that there is good reason to hope that they err not in doctrine, but in words.<sup>88</sup>

Such a view of the doctrine of the Old Church was borne of a close and intimate knowledge of the community through years of active mission amongst them, and reveals a great effort to engage with the 'Oriental' community on an equal footing. This is an attitude which does much to contradict a stereotypical image of the imperialistic Orientalist whose relationship with the Orient is presumed to be exploitative and aloof.

During Maclean's term as a missionary the Anglican mission came under rhetorical attack in the American newspapers and the incident is worth reporting in some detail for the clarification of the Anglican position which is defended by Maclean. The American Presbyterians seemed to have taken objection to the manner in which, as they perceived it, the Anglicans were leading the Syrian Christians further into error. An article in *The Independent* of Iowa in 1887, a copy of which remains in the Anglican archive and which seems to be connected to the American Presbyterian missionary John Haskell Shedd, accused the "High Church party in the Church of England"<sup>89</sup> of attempting to bring the Old East Syrian Church within the Catholic fold.<sup>90</sup> The Nestorians were reported to be apprehensive about the arrival of the Anglicans in the region and the piece claimed that "the new missionaries, by their semi-Romish dress and dogma, excite no little suspicion and fear lest they [were] really but allies to their ancient foes of Rome."<sup>91</sup> The article further states that "the [Anglican] motive has been to promote that union of all the Churches of Christendom

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<sup>88</sup> Arthur John Maclean, *Some account of the Customs of the Eastern Syrian Christians, otherwise variously known as Assyrians, Chaldeans, or Nestorians* (March 1888), Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.09, 3.

<sup>89</sup> *The Independent* (Iowa, 1887), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 109.

<sup>90</sup> I say that it seems to be connected to John Shedd because the article is located in the archive amongst documents written by Maclean refuting the allegations in which he refers directly to Dr. Shedd.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

holding to the historic episcopacy, which is such a favorite idea with a party in the English Church.”<sup>92</sup> It continues by suggesting that the Anglican missionaries:

lay much stress on the binding force of the [ancient ecumenical] councils [...] and on ridding the Nestorians of calling Mary the *Mother of Christ* instead of the *Mother of God*, and saying there are two persons as well as two natures in Christ.<sup>93</sup>

The claim is unremarkable and seems to be fairly close to the goals of the Anglican mission but what is contentious is that it implies that the missionaries were attempting to force these ideas upon the Syrian community against their will. What is of greater interest, however, is Canon Maclean’s refutation of these and other statements attributed to John Shedd. Maclean writing in a personal communication to the Archbishop Frederick Temple, somewhat indignantly claimed that the Anglican missionaries “have never taught that the Ecumenical Councils are of equal force with the Holy Scripture.”<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, he insisted that the missionaries:

have never taught anything about the Councils, because [they had] been too busily employed in teaching the most elementary truths such as [they] should teach to the youngest Sunday School scholars in England.<sup>95</sup>

He further pursued his refutation by distancing the Anglican mission from the comparisons made of them by the American Presbyterians with the methods of the Roman Catholic Church. That is to say he deemphasised the authority of the Anglican Church in the process of missionary activity and emphasised that of Scripture in the articulation of faith. Maclean thus outlined the method of the Anglican mission as follows:

We have endeavoured to found every statement declared to be necessary for belief on holy Scripture: and not to say boldly “the Church teaches this” or “the Church teaches that.” We have not advocated the adoption of the name Theotokos [Mother of God] by the

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Arthur John Maclean, *letter to Archbishop* (1887), Archive of the Archbishop’s Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 104.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

Chaldeans [sic], feeling that until they learnt the true meaning of it, it might only lead them into error. To say therefore that we “lay much stress on the binding force of the Councils, equally with Holy Scriptures and in ridding the Nestorians of calling Mary the “Mother of Christ,” instead of the “Mother of God” is singularly contrary to the truth – and we can only suppose that Dr. Shedd has been imposed upon.”<sup>96</sup>

What seems to be clear from this rhetorical encounter is that the American Presbyterian accusations frame the Anglican mission as a form of proselytisation by stealth, that is to say that they perceived the Anglicans to be using their position of influence to impose authority over the Syrian Church by turning it into another branch of Catholicism. What seems equally clear is that Maclean for his part was emphatic in avoiding any form of coercion and instead desired that any alterations in Syrian doctrine should come from the Syrians themselves. Once again this emphasises the absence of any form of coercion exercised by the Anglicans over the Syrian community. The Anglicans chose to disagree with the Old East Syrian Church on the particular point of Christology, as indeed one might expect them to, but they did not insist that the Syrians should surrender their beliefs in return for aid. Furthermore, they continued to respect the authority of the Old Church hierarchy as the legitimate representatives of the Syrian community in spite of these differences. This demonstrates a considerable degree of regard for the legitimacy of the Old Church as an institution and a consequent absence of coercion in the methods adopted by the Anglican mission.

Maclean’s narrative, therefore, seems to offer little in terms of a justification of imperialism but his descriptive style is nonetheless Orientalist. He states, for example, that it “is because we look at things so differently to Easterns, that I do not believe we Westerns will ever directly convert Islam to Christianity.”<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, it is this hope for the conversion of the Orient to Christianity in a specifically Oriental form which directs the entire project of the Anglican mission to the Assyrian Christians. Maclean emphasises the non-political nature of this mission in a letter to

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-5.

<sup>97</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letters from Assyria*. - No. 8. From Canon Maclean, *Urmi 1889*, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.15, 1.

the Archbishop of Canterbury which is reproduced in the mission newsletter as follows:

I ought to mention that we are most particular about not interfering in temporal matters. The people have their representative who conducts all their legal affairs, and with whom we do not meddle. A message from us to the authorities is the rarest occurrence, and hardly ever except about our own affairs.<sup>98</sup>

While the situation of the Christians on the Ottoman side of the border is reported by Maclean as being oppressive, the governance of the Shah of Persia where the mission station was based was reported to be far more benign. He describes the situation there as follows:

In writing to your Grace we have refrained from enlarging on all the oppressions inflicted by the Turkish Government on its Christian subjects in Kurdistan through its officials. We are here in a position to contrast it with that of the Persians, who, for a barbarous government treat their Christian subjects comparatively fairly: but it is right that your Grace should know what miserable lives the mountaineers live who are not 'Ashirets' or Tribal, that is semi-independent.<sup>99</sup>

As with Riley, Maclean perceived that the condition of the Christian communities in the Ottoman Empire under Turkish rule was precarious and that their safety could not be guaranteed without external pressure and that on the Persian side of the border, where oppression was perceived to be negligible, there was no need to have recourse to diplomatic pressure. Maclean's account does diverge somewhat from that of Riley, however, in that Maclean attributes the perilous state of the Christian community in the Ottoman Empire to the deliberate despotism of the Turkish government, rather than solely to the Kurds. Maclean asserts that:

The worst cases are when [the Syrians] are near the Turkish soldiers, as then they are unmercifully pillaged by them as well as by the Kurds.

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<sup>98</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letters from Assyria*. - no. 6. From Rev. A. R. Edington. Urmī, November 1888. Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.13, 3. Despite the title the quotation is from a letter written by Cannon Maclean.

<sup>99</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letter to the Archbishop* (10th March 1888), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 291.

The Turks are anxious to keep all strangers out of Kurdistan, so that their misdeeds may not be seen. We of course are not primarily interested in their treatment of the Kurds but from all I have seen they treat them but little better when they get the chance.<sup>100</sup>

The import of this observation is that, according to Maclean, the possibilities of mission on the Ottoman side of the border were drastically reduced without the strong support of the British Ambassador.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, Maclean states that: “our presence in the mountains, unsupported as we are by any efficient protection from our ambassador, does the people more harm than good.”<sup>102</sup> Thus attempts at political non-intervention were compromised by the perceived hostility of the Ottoman government, which is represented as wishing to keep its crimes against the Syrians and Kurds from an international public gaze.<sup>103</sup> Nonetheless, Maclean suggests that the moral imperative of assistance to a sister Church requires that diplomatic pressure should be brought to bear.

Maclean’s portrayal of the situation is then given greater legitimacy through comparison to Biblical events as Maclean muses upon the tribulations of the ancient Israelites. “It is sad”,<sup>104</sup> he states, “to think that these Christians are in much the same position as the Children of Israel in Egypt who at first suffered from Moses’ coming to them.”<sup>105</sup> The Anglican policy of appealing to diplomatic pressure certainly complicates the avowed neutrality of the mission but the context in which it is applied should also be borne in mind. Maclean argues that it is a moral duty to protect the Syrian Christians because by actively maintaining the *status quo* Britain has already contributed to the suffering of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire. In a somewhat passionate outburst, he relates to the Archbishop, in a personal letter which was then reproduced in the mission’s periodical newsletter, the feeling which the missionaries held with regard to diplomatic pressure:

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>103</sup> A situation and a dilemma not dissimilar to the concern of the present-day ‘Western’ nations for the peoples of the nation-state of Syria under Bashar al-Assad. I think that the analogy is a useful one in understanding the level of anxiety felt by the missionaries for the safety of the communities of the Old East Syrian Church.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

We cannot help feeling that it is the duty of those Christian nations who for their own ends keep the Turkish Empire from collapse, to guarantee the safety of the Christian inhabitants of that Empire. And that when European travellers are told, as we were by Lord Salisbury, not to note down grievances, it is impossible to help feeling that these Christians have to suffer to serve the ends of Western politicians. I trust your Grace will forgive the boldness of these remarks: but those who see with their own eyes the down trodden state of the people cannot but be indignant at an impotent state like Turkey being allowed to go on with their wicked treatment of them: the people of the Lebanon are secured by us and by France, while these people, who have suffered as bad if not worse massacres, are not even allowed to report their grievances.<sup>106</sup>

It can be seen from this quotation that, far from being represented as serving a political interest, the application of ambassadorial pressure upon the Ottoman government is in Maclean's view in direct contradiction to the political and economic interests of a 'Western' political establishment. This statement is interesting because it is neither imperialist nor anti-imperialist in its sentiment. Maclean does not suggest that it is good or right that the Ottoman Empire should be supported by European powers but rather that, given present actualities, it is a moral obligation to redress the injustices caused by European exploitation. According to this narrative the Anglican mission does not seem to be an 'interest' created for the purpose of the political or economic advantage of the 'West' but is instead presented as a moral impediment to it. Furthermore, this impediment is described in terms of a call to action to redress the imbalance which political and economic interest has brought about. Maclean, quoting his fellow missionary the Reverend Browne,<sup>107</sup> vividly evokes this duty to act through an analogy as follows: "As it is,"<sup>108</sup> he states "we

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<sup>106</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letters from Assyria*.- No. 8. From Canon Maclean, Urmi 1889, Assyrian Mission Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, G3200 3.15, 1.

<sup>107</sup> The Reverend Browne was stationed in Kochanes on the Ottoman side of the border in the Kurdish mountains in the same village as the Mar Shimun.

<sup>108</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Correspondence* (26th December 1887), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-3, 225

English are like the ruffians who stood in the street and saw the man kicking his wife to death, and did not interfere because it was not their business.”<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, Maclean argues that a missionary without diplomatic support was likely to cause the Syrians of the Kurdish mountains even more trouble and persecution than if none were sent at all.<sup>110</sup> This latter statement is perhaps a tacit admission that their work does indeed have a political consequence, but Maclean does not seem to recognise this as being a form of intervention. Instead Maclean argues that it was therefore essential that not only should a missionary be sent to Kochanes in Ottoman Kurdistan in accordance with Anglican obligations to the wishes of the Mar Shimun, but that the Vali of the province should be made to ‘fear’ him. Maclean adds that “these people [the Turks] only mistake a conciliatory spirit for timidity.”<sup>111</sup> He supports this policy with the observation that “the Dominicans are very strong at Mosul because they are backed so strongly by the French Government. And, where their influence extends, the Christians are in consequence well treated by the Turks.”<sup>112</sup>

So, it can be seen from the above examples that Maclean was not averse to the idea of appealing to political power in pressuring the Ottoman Porte in the interests of protecting the Syrian community from a perceived despotism. As with Riley, this makes his position in terms of imperialism somewhat ambiguous. His call to action does not serve any obvious political or economic advantage, in fact harmonious relations with the Ottoman Empire which were crucial to the effective exploitation of the *status quo* were jeopardised by such diplomatic intervention. Nonetheless, the ambiguity of the situation lies in the fact that Maclean’s religious and well intentioned moral agenda have drawn him into a situation where his avowed political neutrality is thrown into question through his overt alliance with the politically dominant power of British imperialism. Maclean’s justification for diplomatic intervention is presented as a desire for the Orient as a whole to reform itself but it relies upon his Orientalist assumptions as to the inferiority of Oriental government. He describes his hope as follows:

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Arthur Maclean, *Letter to the Archbishop* (10th March 1888), AM-3, 290.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

When the oppression of a bad government is taken away there will be hope for [the Syrians] - of course we do not say this to the people themselves – we endeavour to make them good subjects of their present rulers.<sup>113</sup>

Critically, it can be seen from this last statement that Maclean's hope was for the evolution of a more equitable form of government through the education of Ottoman society and in particular the Syrian community, which presumably would have played a large part in this process. There is, therefore, a clear distancing in this vision from ideas of overt imperialism and colonisation but there is a distinct Orientalism to the notion that the Ottoman world needs to be cajoled into the 'right' course of action through diplomatic intervention. From one point of view Maclean's outrage at the exploitation of the Orient can be seen as the very essence of an anti-imperialist sentiment of speaking truth to power, but simultaneously his inability to see 'Orientals' as capable of solving their own problems means that, to paraphrase Said, he is incapable of granting them their freedom.<sup>114</sup>

The final voice for consideration in my analysis of the imperialistic credentials of the Anglican missionaries' textual record takes us forward to the period just prior to the First World War through the writings of the Reverend William Ainger Wigram. As was shown in chapter three, Wigram's Orientalism emphasised the *essential difference* which he perceived to exist between Orientals and Occidentals, but it was also noted that he brought to his narrative neo-Darwinian concepts that sub-divided the 'nations' of the Orient into specifically 'racial' categories.<sup>115</sup> The articulation of difference as a racial characteristic lends to Wigram's narrative a sense of the immutable 'otherness' of the 'Oriental' which can perhaps be seen as a crystallisation of the notion of *essential difference* into a pseudo-scientific theory. These ideas of race feed into his stance regarding interference in the Orient on a political level.

In his *Cradle of Mankind* Wigram articulates the notion that 'the mixing of the races' would lead to inferior offspring, an idea which seems immediately to discourage the notion of colonisation. Wigram makes this point indirectly through reference to the

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<sup>113</sup> Arthur Maclean, Letter to Archbishop (1889-90), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-5, 174.

<sup>114</sup> I refer here to Edward Said's critique of Joseph Conrad. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 34.

<sup>115</sup> See chapter three, section - *Restoration and Essential Difference*. Also see: Bernasconi and Lott, *The Idea of Race*, xi. See also: Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 11.



supposedly ephemeral conquests of Alexander the Great and of the failure of the Crusades to transform the Orient into the image of the 'West'.<sup>116</sup> His fear of tampering with an essential Oriental nature is most clearly articulated in the introduction to this book, where he states that 'Western' reforms could not convert the Orient into the Occident and may instead have significant negative consequences through the accidental creation of some new hybrid.<sup>117</sup> Here Wigram is engaging with conceptions of race which were becoming axiomatic as markers of difference in this period of British imperial expansion and hegemony and his intended audience would seem to be that of the general British reading public. His racial theory is later reinforced, when speaking of the changing cosmopolitan nature of Beirut, by his statement that "the known evils of the East may be preferable to the unknown crop that will spring from a confusion of East and West."<sup>118</sup> Conquest is therefore presented as futile, or even dangerous, and thus the thrust of Wigram's thesis is to allow the Orient to be what he feels it naturally is, a kind of antithesis to 'Western' rationalism and self-understanding; nonetheless, and equally importantly, Wigram suggests that ideally this Oriental realm should be a Christian one.

This articulation of the relationship between 'East' and 'West' implies a politically non-interventionist policy towards the Orient but Wigram's narrative on this point seems inconsistent. On the one hand he explicitly states that "Western reform will *not* convert the East",<sup>119</sup> and on the other, as I will show, he advises upon the means by which the 'East' *could* be reformed. In relation to the latter advice, Wigram articulates his concern for the poor governance provided by Turkish rule and in particular the preference given by the Porte to the Muslim Kurds over the Christians of Kurdistan. He states that "the Kurds are favoured at the expense of the Christians [in terms of taxation] because their support has to be courted, although in the

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<sup>116</sup> Wigram writes that "Many of the Crusaders had married Asiatic wives, and the children of such ill-assorted marriages were generally a pretty poor lot. This fact contributed very sensibly to the fall of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem." Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 21, note. See also: *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>117</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 2. This is reminiscent to the ideas of Gobineau, who believed that racial dilution lead to inferior individuals and cultures. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott, eds., *The Idea of Race*, Readings in Philosophy series (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2000), xi.

<sup>118</sup> Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind*, 86.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

development of the country they are much the least valuable asset.”<sup>120</sup> Later in his narrative he emphasised this point by saying that:

One presumes that what the Government wants is a set of peaceable, tax-paying subjects. Yet here, not one village, but scores of villages, inhabited by peaceable rayats who do pay their taxes and ask for nothing better than to be left alone under Ottoman rule; are allowed to be emptied, and filled up by Kurds who let the land go to waste, who never pay taxes at all, and [who] can be trusted not to fight for the Turk in any real emergency.<sup>121</sup>

Wigram’s solution to this situation is both patronising and unrealistic, suggesting that the problem is one of integrity and moral fibre rather than force of arms. Thus the Oriental, who as I have shown was considered to be constitutionally untrustworthy, is presented as incapable of reforming the Ottoman state; and so Wigram argues that:

If Turkey is ever to be reformed, it must be by foreigners who have executive as well as advisory authority; power, that is, to hang an official who does not obey orders, or a chief who breaks the peace. Half a dozen such men would have Kurdistan as safe as Hyde Park inside a year, for if there is one chance in twenty of trouble ensuing, the Kurd does not raid.<sup>122</sup>

It appears from this statement that, in accordance with his essentialist Orientalism, Wigram considers that the injustices committed against Christians by Muslims could be eliminated through the establishment of the rule of law, and that this was lacking because Orientals are incapable of honesty and efficiency. It also seems to be a very clear call to imperialism through the imposition of ‘Western’ control over the Orient, but this is not as clear cut as might at first appear. In his argument, Wigram makes it clear that such foreign advisors would have to be invited by the Ottoman Porte and would be responsible to the authority of the Ottoman government. To Wigram, however, this does not seem a likely event and he asks whether those “who rule in

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

Mesopotamia [would] submit to govern by foreign advice".<sup>123</sup> Wigram's hypothetical plan is both paternalistic and racist but critically his aspiration is not the domination of the Orient by the Occident but rather the tutelage of the former by the latter for the prosperity of an imagined Oriental future. Furthermore, it does not serve the interests of any British imperial agenda, rather it is a paternalistic Orientalism based upon a notion of the essential superiority of Occidentals who he believes can assist their Oriental inferiors. While such notions of paternalistic superiority *can* be put to the service of imperialism by justifying conquest, this does not mean that this is Wigram's sentiment. It would in fact appear from his previous statements that Wigram is opposed to any such engagement with the Orient that would 'corrupt' its essential nature. Furthermore, Wigram's proposed plan to assist the Orient to reform itself is consciously in antagonism with British Imperial interests as he understands them and thus makes it, to some extent, an anti-imperialist sentiment. Wigram argues that:

Our national prestige in the East rests chiefly on our dominance in India [...] We seem content to preserve barbarism in Mesopotamia in order to make our position in India easier; [whereas] Our most straightforward, and in the end our wisest, course would be to promote all developments, and to shoulder manfully the obligations which they entail.<sup>124</sup>

This statement is delivered in the context of a description of the oppression of Christians in a Muslim land where the rule of law is presented as utterly lacking. Wigram is suggesting, therefore, that in contradiction to the political 'interests' of protecting the continued exploitation of India, non-interventionist assistance in the development of equitable governance and the maintenance of the rule of law in Mesopotamia should be Britain's primary duty on moral grounds. Undoubtedly, Wigram's narrative is ambiguous with regard to the issue of interference versus non-interference but his concern is clearly not the pursuit of a political 'interest'. The factors in my evaluation are that intervention on behalf of the Syrian Christians is a primarily moral aspiration which comes at the price of negative political outcomes. Furthermore, the proposed stratagem aims at maintaining the sovereignty of the

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. This is somewhat reminiscent of Kipling's *White Man's Burden*.

political hierarchy within the Orient and the ecclesiastical independence of the Old East Syrian Church on the grounds of the protection of an imagined Oriental nature. Lastly, the concerns of Wigram's essentialist Orientalism require that the cultural integrity of the 'Orient' is maintained.

Of these considerations perhaps the most significant is the aspiration of the Anglican mission to maintain the ecclesiastical independence of the Old East Syrian Church, and this is demonstrated in Wigram's condemnation of the American Presbyterian policy of proselytisation. In a 1909 memorandum written to advise the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his capacity as both an expert in Old Church doctrine and one experienced in dealings with the Syrian community, Wigram states that:

Originally, the avowed object of the American mission was, to help spiritualize the ancient Syrian Church, not to proselytize from it. Circumstances caused that mission, however, to depart from that intention, and an "Evangelical Syrian Church" has been established, under American auspices, but having its own rules and creed.<sup>125</sup>

Wigram explains that this was quite a natural progression for the American missionaries given that their teachings undermined the authority of the Nestorian Patriarch, the Mar Shimun, and given the American's advocacy of religious freedom.<sup>126</sup> He underlines this latter point by pointing out that the:

Mar Shimun has, naturally, a quite different conception of the Church to that of most Americans, regarding it, not as a voluntary religious association (or set of separate associations) of converted men, but as "the body of Christ", of which men are made members by Baptism; he regards the Syrian Church, (not the Chaldean, Evangelical or Anglican body.) as the Church of God for Syrians, from which it is a sin for Syrians to depart.<sup>127</sup>

What is significant within this Anglican account of the American mission is the acceptance by the Anglicans of the Old Church as the legitimate institution for

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<sup>125</sup> William Ainger Wigram, *Memorandum on the Relations between the American mission and the East Syrian Church* (January 1, 1909), Archive of the Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians, Lambeth Palace Library, AM-16, 210.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

Syrians. Consequently, the Anglican aspiration to assist the Syrian Church does not seem to reflect an urge to dominate the Orient. The non-interventionist ethos of the mission is also reflected in the Anglican hope of ecumenical union with the Old Church, and this is clearly expressed in Wigram's account of the principle obstacle barring such an objective. He explains that among Anglican supporters of mission, "a general, but rather vague hope existed that, given Catholic teaching, these "Easterns" would *proprio motu*, abandon the heresy [of Nestorius]",<sup>128</sup> but he adds that this expectation was in hindsight unrealistic. In his evaluation the Syrians had their own agenda and he describes their aims as follows:

They desire first, and desire unanimously, our, - or anybody's – political and monetary help, to enable them to live. But they will not accept such help if it is given only on conditions that imply, or seem to them to imply, the sacrifice of their ecclesiastical independence.<sup>129</sup>

Wigram's argument is that the rather puzzling situation, whereby the Syrian Church is seen to use the name of Nestorius and certain forms of words pertaining to the Nestorian heresy whilst at the same time being orthodox in theological understanding could be attributed to their symbolic use of these terms as markers of independence rather than as actual heresy.<sup>130</sup> He states that:

To show their independence of the "Westerns", and also for political reasons, they refused to use the western technical terms, their object was not to be heretical, but to be independent, and the Christological controversy provided what they themselves would call a "hajāt", viz. a grudge which would give them decent excuse for doing what they for other reasons wished to do.<sup>131</sup>

Wigram's solution to the problems barring ecumenical union between the Church of England and the Old Church was that of compromise through the adoption of a policy which he coins as one of "doctrines not men".<sup>132</sup> The meaning of this proposed

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<sup>128</sup> William Ainger Wigram, *Memorandum*, AM-16, 53.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

policy was that “all anathemas against men be dropped by both sides”.<sup>133</sup> Wigram’s explanation of this rather optimistic proposal was that “the names, whether of doctors or of heretics, are symbols, [but that] they are symbols of different doctrines to different users.”<sup>134</sup> Therefore, when the Anglican Church condemned the Syrian Church for its adherence to Nestorius as a man, it did so on the association of Nestorius with certain principles which the Anglican Church ascribed to Nestorius as a heretic. But when the Syrian Church in its turn spoke of Nestorius it did so by association with entirely different principles and understandings which it gave to these same terms. On the subject of a common theology Wigram then suggests that the creed of St Athanasius, the pre-Ephesine Alexandrian doctor of the Church, “would be sufficient, as the authorised western summary of the doctrines involved in the Christological controversy.”<sup>135</sup> Although his solution was ultimately not taken up by either the Anglican or the Syrian Churches it is nonetheless useful in demonstrating the extraordinary spirit of compromise and the absence of pressure, either pecuniary or rhetorical, over the Syrian Church. What this demonstrates is that although Anglican missionaries such as Wigram can be shown to conform to an Orientalism of *essential difference* in their descriptive style this does not necessarily translate directly into authority over the Orient.

In summary, the expressions of the Anglican missionaries of this study in regard to imperialism can be seen to be somewhat individualistic and suited to the particular experience and concerns of each missionary, but there is also an underlying uniformity to their expression. This can be characterised as a strong tendency to minimise or preclude foreign interventions, to oppose acts of cultural imperialism in the sense of the importation of cultural values and norms, and to pursue a policy which limited the use of diplomatic pressure to those instances which were seen as

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 58. That is, one person of Christ with two natures, Divine and human. A translation of the creed reads as follows: “Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood; Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the Manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ” taken from Anglican Information Service at:

[http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/acis/docs/athanasian\\_creed.cfm#sthash.iGICfK72.dpuf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/acis/docs/athanasian_creed.cfm#sthash.iGICfK72.dpuf)  
08/09/2013.

essential to the welfare of their Christian protégés. The Anglican Orientalism of *essential difference* justifies the separation of the Orient from cultural contamination and precludes colonisation. This particular mode of Orientalism eschewed the use of forms of education which might alter the essential nature of Orientals, and attempted to shield them from ‘Western’ rationalism and republicanism in either religion or politics.

#### 4.2 Expressions of imperialism and anti-imperialism within the American Mission

This section looks at the writings of the American Presbyterian missionaries of the West Persia Mission and analyses the ideas they expressed concerning the relationship between their religious mission and imperial power. Before looking at the more direct comments concerning this relationship, however, it is worth considering the personal motivation which underlies the missionary calling. Louise Wilbur evokes the missionary ideal, and perhaps the self-image of the mission, when she describes her first impressions of missionary work in Persia. The quotations used for the analysis of Miss Wilbur’s views are taken from a collection of her letters home and thus, having such a personal audience in mind, her style of description is consequently both open and relaxed in its judgements allowing for a more free flow of ideas and associations. Miss Wilbur had accompanied the missionary doctor, Joseph Cochran, on a medical field trip to a village in the vicinity of Urumia. After the elders of the village had left, having shown their respect and appreciation for the doctor’s visit, a group of men came to petition him. Louise Wilbur explains her understanding of the event and its importance as follows:

After the elders left [a group of Syrian villagers came] to beg the Doctor to use his influence to help them get back their sheep, which had been stolen by the Koords [...] After them, the lame and halt and blind thronged in, as they had more or less in other villages as soon as they learned that the “Hakim sahib” (Master doctor) was there [...] I

was reminded of many things that are said about Christ – the press of the people, their filth and disease, and as Dr. Cochran stood among them, so clean and dignified and refined, so patient and courteous, he seemed a worthy representative of the Great Physician. Afterwards as we went up the Mountain, he told me that he could give sight to five or six who were totally blind from cataract, and that he thought by pulling all the wires, he might get back the sheep. He said that in thinking about staying in America he felt [that] he could only do [there] what there were a dozen men ready and glad to do, and that all he'd be able to accomplish would be the support of himself and [his] family, while here if he didn't do these things, no one would.<sup>136</sup>

The wording of this quotation is a little clumsy perhaps but the sense of the narrative is nonetheless clear, the missionary comes to Persia as a duty to humanity and does so at personal loss in pecuniary terms. So, in discussing the imperial or anti-imperial sentiments of these missionary individuals it is important not to lose sight of the fact that their primary motivation seems to have been a sincere desire to help others and to live up to the example of the life of Christ. Such an aspiration does much to dismiss notions of cynical agency in the service of political 'interests', but the complexity of the missionaries' situation seems also to have made political neutrality almost impossible.

As an example of this difficulty, the intention to educate the Syrian Christians implicitly altered the balance of power within the Ottoman Empire, and the American missionaries, like their Anglican counterparts, were well aware that this antagonised both the local Muslim notables and the Ottoman government.<sup>137</sup> In an 1881 letter to the Board of Commissioners, John Haskell Shedd expressed his opinion as to the non-political nature of the American Presbyterian mission but argued that this was not the way in which the mission was perceived by the Ottoman government and that this perception was widespread amongst the Muslim population. Speaking of Sultan Abd al Hamid, Shedd states that the "bitter hostility of the Turkish ruler to Mission

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<sup>136</sup> Louise Wilbur, *To Persia to Teach, collected letters of Louise Wilbur 1899-1900*, Archives of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Personal Papers, Archives SPP 19. Page. 88-9.

<sup>137</sup> Although the Persian government and many local Muslims were eager to take advantage of missionary education.



work is a part of the same reaction [that is common] all over the land.”<sup>138</sup> He continues by recounting a representative anecdote, saying:

I called upon the Governor of Gawar – in rank slightly below a Pasha. In the conversation I alluded to the schools & he showed at once signs of disgust to English influence & mission schools. I said [that] as Americans we have no political interest to serve, but only desire to help fellow Christians who are in need – “Oh yes”; he said “you are from ever so many months journey away but you are all alike, your professions & aims may be well but you are leading the people to be discontented & the result is [that] the government is left as bare as that,” holding up his naked finger.<sup>139</sup>

It seems that Shedd was well aware of the fact that the Ottoman government did not wish the American missionaries to either proselytise or educate Ottoman subjects but that it was nonetheless obliged, through treaty obligations and concessions, to allow the missionaries to reside within the Empire.<sup>140</sup> In such a context the American mission could be said to represent the domination of an ‘Oriental’ government by ‘Western’ missionaries through the assertion of rights acquired by the military and economic supremacy of their home nation. Does this, however, make the American missionaries agents of imperialism? In a political sense, the salient point is that no obvious political ‘interest’ is served by such activity. One might point out that foreign missions were immensely popular in the United States during the period covered by this study and that it was often politically expedient for American politicians to support such missions, but this reverses the causality of agency. Instead of mission being the creation of an ‘interest’ for the furtherance of political advantage, as Edward Said had suggested, it is political advantage which is used for the aims of a religious mission.<sup>141</sup> In this sense it is not meaningful to speak of these American Presbyterian missionaries as agents of a political imperialism in the service of their

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<sup>138</sup> John Haskell Shedd, *letter August 1, 1881*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 182.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> As was shown in the analysis of the Anglican missionaries, the treaty rights of Europeans to travel and dwell in Ottoman lands and to have recourse to Ambassadorial protection was taken for granted and asserted by missionaries of every European nationality as a right, and this was also true of the Americans. There were certain limitations on these activities, for example the prohibition from proselytising Muslims, and the necessity of acquiring a firman (an Ottoman governmental approval) to open schools and to proselytise non-Muslims. See: Riley, *Letter to Archbishop* (1886), AM-2, 334.

<sup>141</sup> See: Chapter one, section - *Missionaries in the Context of Imperialism*. Also see: Said, *Orientalism*, 100.

home nation. Nonetheless, even though they do not serve a political interest their very presence, being the result of disproportionate power against the will of the Ottoman state, is a political act of domination.

Furthermore, can we take Shedd's statement, that the missionaries' "only desire [was] to help fellow Christians who are in need",<sup>142</sup> at face value or can we consider the desire to spread particular forms of religious expression and civic values to be a type of imperialism in a cultural form? In chapter one of this thesis I argued that if we view cultural imperialism as an overt and conscious attempt to impose cultural values upon an alien culture, then coercion is a critical element of such a process.<sup>143</sup> In the case of the proselytising and educational activities of the American missionaries of the West Persia Mission the situation is somewhat ambiguous because; on the one hand, the individual proselytes and students were not coerced but chose to engage in these activities; and on the other, the Ottoman government was coerced into allowing these activities to occur. As cultural imperialists in this sense, therefore, the American missionaries are distinctly ambiguous. However, to call them cultural imperialists because they coerced the government of the Ottoman Empire into allowing the distribution of ideas which were welcomed by some of its citizenry seems to be a somewhat tenuous argument. As a formal project, cultural imperialism must surely imply some kind of coercion over the individuals who took up those ideas rather than coercion of a third party in order to make those ideas available for voluntary uptake. To argue otherwise is in some way to deny the agency of those so called 'Orientals' who chose to accept the American Presbyterians' religious beliefs and their ideas of civic virtue.

If, however, we view cultural imperialism as a phenomenon, both less conscious and more diffuse, in which the realities of disproportionate power are enacted in textual representation, then the Orientalist style of the American missionaries can be seen as a form of cultural imperialism. Their educational activities, however, whilst embodying the kinds of epistemic violence which "preclude or destroy local forms of knowledge"<sup>144</sup> must nonetheless be seen in the light of activities which were eagerly sought after by the objects of their mission. It is this voluntary uptake of the

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<sup>142</sup> Vide ante.

<sup>143</sup> See: chapter one, section - *Imperialism in Theoretical Terms*.

<sup>144</sup> Guhin and Wyrzten, *Political Power and Social Theory*, 236.

missionaries' educational work which must be underlined in order to ensure that this form of cultural imperialism is not understood to be coterminous with imperialism more formally conceived.

As was stated at the beginning of this section, the object of this chapter is primarily to reflect the missionaries' own perception as to the nature of their mission as this should influence our evaluation of their relationship with imperial power. While the long term aims of the West Persia Mission were the education and proselytisation of the local population, a large component of missionary activity consisted of periodic responses to famines, epidemics, and wars. These responses were both formative and emotive, and thus reveal the aspirations of the individual missionaries more vividly than their more mundane correspondence. After the famine and epidemics of 1871, which continued into 1872, the American missionaries became almost exclusively preoccupied for a time with the provision of relief to the community around Urumia as a whole.<sup>145</sup> The missionary Miss Jeanie Dean, writing to the Board of Commissioners in 1872, argues that this "opportunity is a most favorable one for exhibiting to the followers of Islam the beneficent & comprehensive sympathy of our religion."<sup>146</sup> Miss Dean's comment reveals an inclination towards persuasion and perhaps conversion by the power of example, and to impress upon the local population the altruistic nature of their form of Christianity through acts of charity and compassion. This self-perception of the missionary ideal is also reflected in criticism of other missionary organisations which are represented as being callously pragmatic. In a personal report to the Board, Benjamin Labaree recounts the details of the famine of 1879-80 and accuses the Roman Catholic missionaries as follows:

The Roman Catholic Lazarist Missionaries are doing much to help the poor and undoubtedly will reap a large crop of their peculiar kind of converts, as they adroitly bestow their charity only on their own people or those who give promise outright of becoming such."<sup>147</sup>

This attack on the motives and practices of the Roman Catholic missionaries implicitly reveals an idealised self-conception of the American mission as one which

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<sup>145</sup> This relief work was not limited to their Christian proselyte community, but also to the Christians of the Old East Syrian Church, the Jewish communities, and the Muslim majority.

<sup>146</sup> Nettie Jean (Jeanie) Dean, *letter January 3, 1872*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter 64.

<sup>147</sup> Benjamin Labaree, *letter February 4, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 30.

gives charity and aid to all without expectation of reimbursement in the form of conversion. Labaree accuses the Lazarist missionaries of effectively buying converts and by implication this is something anathema to the American Presbyterians.<sup>148</sup> He goes on to say how the Roman Catholic, or 'Romanist party' as he puts it, are overtly political due to their funding by the French government.<sup>149</sup> If his accusation is correct then one can understand why Ottoman perceptions of 'Western' missionary intent were so cynical, and even if he is not correct then the circulation of such a rumour must surely have conditioned attitudes which construed missionaries to be the agents of imperial forces. Labaree's polemic indicates his perception that mission should be based upon sincere conversions without inducement and is consequently a statement that subtle coercion through pecuniary assistance is unacceptable to the Presbyterians as a method of missionary practice.

William Ambrose Shedd also speaks of the Russian Orthodox mission in similarly disparaging tones and suggests that its political nature gives rise to hostility from Muslim governments and the local population. Writing in 1901 in a personal report, he informs the Board that local feeling towards the newly arrived Russian mission construed it to be political in nature. He states that there is "a very strong feeling among all classes that [the Russian] mission is political in purpose and that it will be the cause of humiliation and vexation to Mohammedans."<sup>150</sup> He also states that the presence of Belgian Customs officials had caused resentment too and that it "looks as if the Persian Government were committed to a policy of administration through European agents" which he suggest is a policy "bound to arouse no little anti-foreign feeling and religious fanaticism."<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, in a 1912 *Report on Civil Conditions* in Urumia, Shedd is explicit as to the limited acceptability of recourse to diplomatic pressure, stating that "political influence or aid should never be regarded as means to gain adherents to the church."<sup>152</sup> This is perhaps all the more significant coming as it does at a time when imperial Russian and British control over the Iranian nation was reaching its zenith.

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *letter March 2, 1901*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.273. Index, Vol. 196, Letter 34.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *Report on Civil Conditions: Urumia Station: 1912*, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 3: Station Reports. Box 4. Folder 10, page. 3.

This aspiration to be divorced from the political 'interests' of imperial powers does not mean, however, that the American Presbyterian missionaries were completely averse to engaging in politics. After the famine of 1879-80 Kurdish tribes under the leadership of Sheikh Ubayd Allah of Nehri crossed the border from the Ottoman Empire into Persia and laid siege to Urumia. John Haskell Shedd describes to the Board of Commissioners the situation as follows:

We are in a state of war and the whole region about us [is] in a terrible state, the Sheik Obed Allah with an army of near ten thousand Koords is camped about one & a half miles west of the college & the city.<sup>153</sup>

Shedd continues by saying that "the Sheik shows great friendship for us & the English Consul".<sup>154</sup> As a result of this friendship Shedd became involved in negotiations with the Kurdish leader and attempted to negotiate a bloodless compromise. It is clear that Shedd anticipated the worst, fearing that "if the city does not surrender the hordes will be let loose & the city taken by storm [and] We earnestly pray that God may save the populace from massacre."<sup>155</sup> Through his actions Shedd clearly took a political stance in trying to use his influence and connection with the imperial powers of Britain and the United States of America but his motivation in doing so was simply the avoidance of a massacre rather than the pursuit of any wider imperial objective or political 'interest'. It is thus difficult to see these actions as a form of overt political imperialism but at the same time he is, nonetheless, a political actor in regional events which had an international impact. The root of the problem here, I would argue, is that the kind of involvement with the processes of imperial power which are displayed by Shedd's actions are of a completely different order to those of a more conscious political project of expansion which is frequently conjured up by the term imperialism.

Engagement in local political and social activities, however, were not limited to times of crisis, and the missionaries found themselves drawn in as arbiters in local disputes and as leaders of the nascent Syrian Evangelical Protestant community. In his *Report on Civil Conditions* William Ambrose Shedd relates that he fulfilled the role of representative for both the Syrian Evangelical Church and the American

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<sup>153</sup> John Haskell Shedd, *letter October 21, 1880*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 82

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

Presbyterian mission, which he describes as being separate bodies.<sup>156</sup> The object of the mission, however, is frequently referred to by the missionaries in terms of achieving the ecclesiastical and social independence of the proselyte community. We can recall from chapter three, for example, Mary Jewett's comments in her letters that "when there is heed"<sup>157</sup> of the Gospel Word in Persia then "God in his wonderful providence"<sup>158</sup> would bestow economic plenty upon the people. Her narrative thus describes her hope that Persia would develop into a modern industrial nation in its own right through the agency of divine favour. Likewise we can recall John Haskell Shedd's statement that the salvation of the region is to be found in the "conscientiousness of self-help & of trust in God and not in dependence on foreign lands and foreign means."<sup>159</sup> Also the description of the life of the missionary Joseph Gallup Cochran was related in his obituary as the building of a church "organized for self-distinction and self-support",<sup>160</sup> an aspiration which looks to an ideal of independence for the Syrian Evangelical Protestant Church and the euthanasia of mission.<sup>161</sup>

One can discern in the letters of the missionaries a certain degree of frustration at the lack of a spontaneous independence on the part of the nascent Syrian Protestant community. Robert McEwan Labaree in a 1911 *Report on Evangelistic Work* voiced his discouragement at the lack of any "aggressive missionary spirit"<sup>162</sup> amongst the Syrian Evangelical Church and deplored their "spirit of clinging dependence"<sup>163</sup> which hampered the ultimate aims of mission. Labaree continues by explaining the necessity of establishing an independent local evangelical movement for the purpose of conversing the majority Muslim population to Christianity. He writes:

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<sup>156</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *Report on Civil Conditions: Urumia Station: 1912*, RG 91, page. 3

<sup>157</sup> Mary Jewett, *letter November 1, 1871*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.101. Index, Vol. 1, Letter 53.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> John H. Shedd, *letter September 7, 1890*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letter. 164.

<sup>160</sup> See chapter three, section - *Proselytisation and Circumstantial Difference*.

<sup>161</sup> That is the euthanasia of the American mission which, it was hoped, would be replaced by a vibrant local Protestant community with its own missionary aspirations to convert the majority Muslim populations of the region – and perhaps to rekindle within the 'native' Church the missionary zeal of ages long gone.

<sup>162</sup> Robert McEwan Labaree, *Report of Evangelistic Work – Urumia Station. 1910-1911*. RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 3: Station Reports. Box 4. Folder 10. Page 2.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

There is need of a genuine spiritual apprehension and of the conscience, that our people may see and feel the burden of responsibility which is resting upon them for the evangelization of the Moslems about them. [...] whatever may be the missionary's part in that revival it must be [...] largely the work of the Syrians themselves; that is, under God, it must be through themselves and for themselves that it shall be brought about.<sup>164</sup>

There was, therefore, clearly an aspiration that not only the nascent Protestant community but also Persia as a nation would be able to stand politically independent from foreign interference. Engagement in local political activities by the missionaries themselves in the affairs of their proselyte community was seen by them as a temporary necessity in facilitating the hoped-for independence of a local Evangelical Protestant Church.

This willingness to act politically and to use diplomatic influence on behalf of their protégés and the wider community was not, however, universally accepted by all the missionaries of the West Persia Mission. Jeremiah Oldfather, who had served in a Union regiment during the American Civil War before studying at Lane Theological Seminary for his Doctor of Divinity, strongly denounced the policy of intervention in temporal matters.<sup>165</sup> In a letter to the Board of Commissioners which urges a modification of mission strategy, he criticised the evils of 'interference' and expressed his strong aversion to any form of imperial 'interest'. His recommendation was to adopt a solely evangelistic method in a purely spiritual mission which in turn demanded a 'stepping away' from all temporal assistance. He writes:

The interference of the missionary in matters of government are always attended with precarious results for the good of the people. "Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's & unto God the things that are God's" has always been a most trying task for the missionary.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* The underlining is in the original, and here Labaree is talking of the native Syrian Evangelical Church when he speaks of 'our' people.

<sup>165</sup> Winton U. Solberg, "William Oldfather: Making the Classics Relevant to Modern Life," *No Boundaries: University of Illinois Vignettes*, ed. Lillian Hoddeson. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 2004.

<sup>166</sup> Jeremiah M. Oldfather, *letter March 8, 1884*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.119. Index, Vol. 3, Letter. 125.

He continues by listing the ways in which, in all good faith, the missionaries had interfered, by representing the rights of the Christian community, by advising them, and by acting as judges of social and political disputes.<sup>167</sup> He states:

We have interfered when a daughter or a donkey has been stolen. We have interfered when a church or a fence had to be built. We have interfered when a man was to be buried or married. We have interfered in the behalf of the oppressions of the rich & the poor. We have interfered in time of war & in time of peace. In fact there is no time or occasion in which we have not had our say in the administration of this people.<sup>168</sup>

The problem with the *status quo*, he argues, is that it inhibits the growth of the community's independent spirit and frequently serves to embitter non-Christians and non-Protestants towards the 'favoured' community.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, this state of affairs risks building a hierarchy which was to Oldfather's mind comparable to a Roman Catholic system of ecclesiastical organisation, and is thus highly undesirable in a Protestant mission. Alluding back to a time in Europe when Protestant communities were throwing off the temporal control of the Roman Catholic Church in matters of state, Oldfather writes that "the papal bishop was told [that] the prelates have no business with the affairs of government"<sup>170</sup> and he goes on to express the hope that, likewise, "may [it be] in the future [that] the freemen of this province will not permit any interference [from us]."<sup>171</sup>

Oldfather urged the missionaries of the West Persia Mission that they must put aside their concern for the civil and temporal conditions of the proselyte community and focus instead upon the work of evangelisation. He writes that as American citizens the missionaries must "give up all the luxury & freedom of [their] beloved land",<sup>172</sup> a recommendation which seems to suggest that they should not try to impose the social liberties that they would expect as a right in their home country. It can be seen from these statements that Oldfather was painfully aware of the political nature of

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*



any attempts by the Presbyterians to defend the civil rights and represent the temporal wishes of the local Christian community. Furthermore, he clearly felt that such political action was beyond the remit of the mission and potentially counterproductive to its real aim of evangelisation. His belief in the local Christians to one day throw off the benign oppression of missionary administration demonstrates a perception of their potential capabilities as equals. There is clearly, in Oldfather's view, a strong desire to oppose any form of imperialism, be it political or cultural. His intent, and one which seems to have placed him slightly apart from the other missionaries, was to avoid all engagement in secular matters despite the natural desire to protect the community from oppression.

Oldfather's was, however, a somewhat unique voice amongst the American Presbyterian missionaries in the lengths to which he was prepared to go in avoiding interference in temporal matters, and a far more common point of view was that morality requires one to act in the face of oppression even if one's aims were essentially spiritual. A good example of such a nuanced stance comes from the Reverend William Ambrose Shedd writing some twenty five years later than Oldfather in a Report to the Board of Commissioners.<sup>173</sup> This report was written in the context of the turmoil of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and of a Russian Occupation of the region around Urumia. Shedd addresses the issue of political engagement for the interests of the Syrian Protestant community stating that:

While it is true that it is not our business to speculate either as to the political forecast or the right political policy, it is [also] true that our work is an institution touching the life of the people in so many points that complete isolation from political matters is simply impossible.<sup>174</sup>

Shedd expands upon this point suggesting that there is no clearly defined boundary between the political and the social, explaining that:

It has been difficult to steer our course. The interests of the native Protestant community have compelled us in one way or another to have dealings with government and fidais, Russians and Turks. Even

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<sup>173</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd*. Page. 169-175.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

when the dealings are social, opinion cannot but have political implications.<sup>175</sup>

He continues by listing the many ways in which the Syrian Protestant community needs to be represented by the American missionaries who are the only effective means of ensuring the rights of the community. These activities included, amongst others, the representation of a native Protestant pastor to the Persian government, the sheltering of another from a blood feud with the mountain Nestorians, and advising the local community on steering their own political course through the events of these revolutionary times.<sup>176</sup> The notion of the moral obligation of the missionaries to act as local judges when called upon is a point which William Shedd reiterates some years later, and just prior to the First World War, in his 1912 *Report on Civil Conditions*. This time he broadens his argument to include the representation of Muslims as well as Christians, stating that:

we may have a duty to use personal influence to secure justice. This must be done with the greatest caution and with distinct disclaimer of any authority on our part. Such cases constantly arise and Moslems as well as Christians are appealing to us for help.<sup>177</sup>

An important aspect of the perceived duty to engage in the representation of all members of the local community was the principle of setting a good example and of being role models for the nascent Syrian Evangelical Protestant Church. Shedd's argument started from the notion of taking a political stance to defend the local community and ultimately led to an engagement in regional politics. In relation to the Ottoman Empire during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in 1909 Shedd writes, in a *Report on Political Conditions*, that:

We have been regarded as anti-Turkish and there is a measure of truth in the charge. Turkish occupation has seemed to me the least desirable of several possible results. It would make this region a frontier province cut off by natural barriers from the rest of the Turkish

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-3.

<sup>177</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *Report on Civil Conditions: Urumia Station: 1912*, RG 91, page. 3.

Empire and by political boundaries from the rest of Azarbaijan [sic], to which it naturally belongs.<sup>178</sup>

From this statement it might be argued that the mission seems to have had a political agenda in its hostility towards the Ottoman Empire, but the line of causality indicates that Shedd's 'interest' was not a political one but the welfare of the people he had come to represent. His concern was, first and foremost, the welfare of the proselyte community and as has been shown this community was not conceived of as an outpost of colonial or imperial expansion in either political or cultural terms, but rather as an ecclesiastically independent entity whose loyalties lay within the context of Persia conceived of as a heterogeneous nation. Shedd's report was written to the background of the constitutional revolution and the siege of Tabriz, in a situation where a reformist Nationalist party was hard pressed by the Royalists and where both the Russian and the Turkish States were looking for a pretext for intervention. Shedd explains his position and that of the mission he was representing in some detail as follows:

I do not believe that many people doubt that our sympathies are with the party that desires reform and progress; nor does it seem possible not to express that sympathy in various ways. But in any formal relations it seems necessary to keep back and I have tried to do so. There is also the fact that most of the ostensible leaders of the Nationalist cause do not represent the cause of progress and are demagogues or worse. But there is such a cause in Persia, a movement largely apart from political movements, and we can do much for it by education and sympathy. This movement is opposed to foreign intervention and for this reason it is important that we should not be identified with the Russian intervention.<sup>179</sup>

The *Report* from which this statement is taken was not an open document meant for general circulation but presented to the Board of Commissioners and I think that it is fair to assume that Shedd was reporting the situation as he believes it to be, and as such it is a clear demonstration of the anti-imperialist stance of the Presbyterian

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<sup>178</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, "December 1909: Reports. Report on Political Conditions of the Country and the Relations of the Missionary Work to Them." *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd*, 173.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-4.

mission. In this respect it seems reasonable to describe the mission as active in political matters but as essentially neutral to all but the interests of the proselyte community and an imagined Persian nation of the future. What is important in terms of Orientalism is that this imagined future is the future of an American Presbyterian understanding and not necessarily that of the Persian people. Shedd ends his report to this effect:

To exercise much direct influence or to possess political power would be a calamity to our work [...] May our prayers never cease that God may guide Persia out of all these troubles into peace and true liberty.<sup>180</sup>

This seems to be a clear articulation of an aspiration for the emergence of an independent and self-reformed Persian State. Some years later, and just prior to the First World War, Shedd was asked to accept a commission as the honorary vice consul of Urumia for the U.S. government, and I think that his response in refusing the post is useful in reinforcing this policy of attempted neutrality with regard to the imperial powers.<sup>181</sup> Michael Zirinsky quotes Shedd's response as follows:

an objection to my being a regular agent here is the misunderstanding that might arise to our political position. People here are apt to consider missions as political agencies.<sup>182</sup>

What comes across clearly in these statements is the desire of American Presbyterian missionaries to use their political and social prestige as American citizens to protect the proselyte community in Persia without themselves becoming political agents. That is to say that they did not wish to further the 'interests' of the American government but they did wish to use its power to coerce local political actors within the Orient. To those who were thus indirectly coerced the American missionaries must have appeared to have been the agents of a broadly conceived external Christian power that wished to dominate a Muslim polity, but such a judgment oversimplifies their agency and overlooks their intention. It should be

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>181</sup> This information comes from an article by Michael Zirinsky. See: Michael Zirinsky, *American Presbyterian Missionaries at Urmia During the Great War*, Iran Chamber Society, Saturday June 1st 2013.

[http://www.iranchamber.com/religions/articles/american\\_presbyterian\\_missionaries\\_zirinsky.pdf](http://www.iranchamber.com/religions/articles/american_presbyterian_missionaries_zirinsky.pdf) Page. 7.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

remembered that all influence was directed through the conduit of the Persian State for the purpose of ensuring the security of a community of Persian citizens with no benefit to American foreign policy or economic advantage. There is of course a natural ambiguity and innate contradiction to this aspiration to use political influence in a neutral manner, but I think it is reasonable to suggest from the evidence provided so far that they should not be seen as the agents of political 'interests' – but rather as the manipulators of imperial power for the purposes of a religious ideal. However, not all of the commentary left by the American Presbyterian missionaries is so moderated and some of their written testimony is considerably more strident.

Within the mission Archive it can be seen that around the middle of 1882 rumours began to surface of a secret treaty which had been signed between Persia and Russia and which would allow for the occupation of the Northern territories in the region south of Azerbaijan and including Urumia.<sup>183</sup> This rumour was fuel for speculation as to the continued prospects of the mission and this is reflected in a personal report to the Board by Samuel Graham Wilson who expounded upon the theoretical consequences of such an alteration in the balance of power in the region and upon its reception amongst the people of Urumia:

The importance of the secret treaty between Russia & Persia [...] is in its being one more step in the gradual encroachment of Russia upon us. [...] Many of the Nestorians are inclined to look to her as the only escape from [the] oppressions of [the] Persians & [the] ravages of [the] Koords. The common Persian is indifferent & would not raise a finger to prevent annexation if only assurance of bodily safety & undisturbed continuance in their present professions were given.<sup>184</sup>

Wilson seems to underestimate the level of national feeling amongst the Persian people at this time and suggests that occupation by Russia would be a good thing in terms of law and order. As such Wilson seems to be indifferent if not slightly in favour of such an imperialist act of occupation within the context of a negotiated treaty, and while this does not make him an agent of Imperial Russia his stand point

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<sup>183</sup> This occupation never seems to have become a reality at the time but anticipates the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente which divided Persia into northern and southern zones of influence which were controlled by the two Great Powers and which may be considered to be an element of the so called 'Great Game'. It is also interesting that this rumour coincides with the Triple Alliance between Germany, Italy, and Austro-Hungary.

<sup>184</sup> Samuel Graham Wilson, *letter September 6, 1882*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.118. Index, Vol. 2, Letter 273.

is somewhat anti-democratic. With respect to the consequences of occupation for the Presbyterian mission Wilson is decidedly pragmatic, suggesting that:

How Russian occupation would affect our Mission work would depend very much on the accompanying circumstances. If we should gain a formal hearing in the readjustment of affairs, & be recognized & legalized as an existing institution our opportunity for work among Mussulmans, now so restricted, would be free & open & very encouraging. Many secretly friendly would become open adherents. We might also become an agency to work freely in these parts of the Russian Empire. If on the other hand our work was not recognized as legitimate we might speedily be so hampered under the iron heel of Russia as to make our attempts practically in vain or perhaps expulsion would be our lot.<sup>185</sup>

While Wilson seems quite happy to accept Russian imperialism if it will improve law and order in the region, his real anxiety is its effect upon the proselytising mission. His focus is revealing in its lack of concern for temporal matters, it would be hard to accuse him of pursuing the imperial 'interests' of the American government and he certainly is not an agent of a Theocratic Orthodox Russian State. Perhaps one might consider him to be an agent of a more generally conceived 'Western' influence, but such an assumption has a tendency to reify the 'Occident' as a coherent entity. In fact Wilson's apparent lack of concern about the Russian occupation, except in so much as it effects the work of proselytisation, underlines a complete indifference towards imperialism in political terms. It is perhaps this indifference to the projects of imperial power which lays the American missionaries open to accusations of conscious complicity. The readiness of these foreigners to continue their work amongst a foreign occupation may inspire a natural tendency to conflate their interests but this would seem to oversimplify the case.

Linkages between mission and imperial power are also demonstrated later in Wilson's report in relation to the political agents of the American government. In this report Wilson speaks of the plans of the U.S. Government to send out its first

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

representative to Persia and suggests that the most important characteristic of such a candidate should be his utility to the Presbyterian mission. Wilson writes:

Oh! That the man sent to represent us may be a man after God's own heart. Our country has now the reputation which the lives of the Missionaries have given it. May it not be blighted. The chief department of a minister's or consul's work will be the affairs of the missionaries. Should he be indifferent to our spiritual interests, an opponent or most of all under our circumstances a Catholic no worse affliction could come upon us. Let earnest exertions be put forth to have the right man selected.<sup>186</sup>

There is an ominous note in the last line which suggests that the influence of the Presbyterians in the politics of the United States would enable them to influence the choice of candidate. Once again it can be seen, however, that the causality of religious mission as the instrument of the political machinations of an Occidental State has been reversed. It is clear that Wilson feels that the purpose of political representation, and thus the application of imperial power, is the furtherance of their religious mission and not the other way round. This is clearly not political imperialism but it might be argued that this religious mission was itself a form of cultural imperialism, the imposition of American cultural values and ideas upon the Orient. The problem with this assertion is that it implies that the Presbyterian mission represents a uniform American culture which was being introduced to an equally uniform Oriental culture. However, this is clearly not the case as Wilson has demonstrated the fragmented nature of American culture through his hope that the American ambassador does not represent one of the many other groups within a culturally diverse America who are opposed to the Presbyterians. The reality would thus seem to be much more fragmented. It would seem that American Presbyterians were only on occasion able to apply diplomatic pressure through their political connections in the United States to afford some protection over their tiny proselyte community in Persia. The justifications as expressed by the missionaries for their mission, as has been shown, are far from a desire to dominate the Orient and would instead seem to be a genuine attempt to 'win souls for Christ' combined with an

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

inability to stand back and remain passive in the face of perceived injustices and oppressions. Nonetheless, their ability to call upon the imperial might of Britain and America through diplomatic representation is in itself an act of imperialism regardless of their anti-imperialist rhetoric and their avowed neutrality. These considerations suggest that their relationship with imperial power is both ambiguous and confused. An interesting point in the reversal of causation, however, is that a very particular religious world-view was able to influence two dominant world powers to engage in actions counter to their political 'interests'; and this perhaps underlines the subconscious, emotional, and unplanned elements in the processes of imperial expansion.

A further expression of the perceived acceptability of external forces to bring protection to the Christians of the Kurdish region was mentioned in chapter three and comes from the reverend Edmund Wilson McDowell.<sup>187</sup> In 1895 and 1896 the missionaries reported further famines which were followed by extensive raiding and the massacre of Christians by the Kurdish tribes on the Ottoman side of the boarder. It will be recalled that McDowell spoke of these events in terms of the providence of God and the spiritual attitude of the Syrian Christians. It was McDowell's opinion that the massacres were the manifestation of God's lack of favour in a Nestorian Church which failed to be sufficiently 'spiritualised'.<sup>188</sup> His report on these events expresses the fate of the Christians of the Kurdish region as being entirely in the hands of God and as such the interventions of imperial powers are presented by him as somewhat irrelevant to the outcome. Rather surprisingly, however, McDowell follows these statements with the paradoxical hope that the European powers could indeed intervene by extending a protectorate over the Kurdish region. McDowell thus asks of his reader, the secretary of the Board of Commissioners, the somewhat rhetorical question:

Is it impossible that there should be established a protectorate for the Christians in Turkey in Asia which on the one hand would prevent

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<sup>187</sup> Chapter three, section - *Proselytisation and Circumstantial Difference*.

<sup>188</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *letter January 21, 1896*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.126. Index, Vol. 12, Letter 134.



injustice to the Koords & on the other protect [the Christians] from them?"<sup>189</sup>

The mixture of a divine providence narrative, which seems to be entirely in keeping with the standpoint of the Rev. Oldfather, and the idea of a European protectorate is rather perplexing but perhaps it highlights the fact that narratives of meaning do not necessarily have to be logically consistent to be satisfying to the individual. On the one hand, the idea of being in tune with a divine plan may give the necessary encouragement needed for the missionaries to carry on their difficult work. On the other, the idea of a protectorate can be seen as a reflexive desire to do something in a situation of utter impotence. The images seem to be taken from opposing discourses and thrown together with little consideration for their compatibility; the divine providence concept seemingly emanating from an evangelistic and essentially pacifist tradition, whilst the idea of a protectorate seems to be a stock Orientalist response to the perceived incapacity of the 'Orient' to manage its own affairs. An important insight provided by the observation of this paradoxical juxtaposition of narrative themes is that while a discursive tradition may prompt and limit specific narrative expressions it is not determinative because it is not the only discourse available.

In contrast to the readiness of some of the American missionaries to advocate the intervention of foreign powers to keep the peace in times of perceived lawlessness within Ottoman Kurdistan, when it came to the rebellion against the *status quo* in Persia the opinions of the missionaries seem to be far more considered and considerably more cautious.<sup>190</sup> John Newton Wright, speaking in 1896 in relation to Armenian revolutionaries in a letter concerning the necessary management of mission staff, relates how one of the mission's Armenian teachers in Khoi would probably have to be expelled for his involvement in political activities. Wright describes the teacher's conduct to the Board in these terms: "he has joined one of the revolutionary societies of Armenians & has been otherwise mixed up too much in worldly affairs."<sup>191</sup> This is interesting as it explicitly draws a line between involvement in political activism and the spiritual activities of missionary work, implying that the

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<sup>189</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *letter March 2, 1899*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.123. Index, Vol. 6, Letters out of Place – Mountain Work – Letter 217.

<sup>190</sup> This is perhaps simply because in this case it was Christians doing the rebelling.

<sup>191</sup> John Newton Wright, *letter March 30, 1896*, microfilm FM10 F761a r.126. Index, Vol. 12, Letter 163.

work of the Presbyterian mission should be limited exclusively to the latter. There would thus seem to be a clear division in the minds of the American missionaries between the perceived predatory activities of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire, which are not considered to be 'political', and the supposedly more political activities of the civil war taking place in Persia. The differentiation made by the missionaries between the Ottoman Kurdish situation and that of the Persian civil insurrection seems demonstrate a willingness to support foreign intervention to restore law and order versus an ethical aversion to interfering in the 'legitimate' political processes of a nation; and this underlines their own Orientalist cultural bias in terms of the forms of organisation and government which they perceive to be legitimate and civilised.

In a more personal letter in 1909 Louise Wilbur Shedd presents a similar picture of detachment from political action by the missionaries in the context of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. She makes clear her sympathy for the Nationalist cause, revealing that she "felt sad to hear of the Nationalist reverses"<sup>192</sup> but at the same time she expresses the official stance of the mission's neutrality in these matters by stating that the missionaries "ought not take sides".<sup>193</sup> Her sentiment also does much to dispel any notions of missionary complicity with the 'interests' and machination of imperial powers, stating that:

We are willing to endure even the delays of our mails if out of it all Persia can find a new freedom. Sometimes it seems impossible that this people can govern themselves, but we must believe that God has some beneficent purpose, and that out of all this confusion and bloodshed will come a better state of things.<sup>194</sup>

This quotation strongly emphasises the more pacifist narrative of divine providence and the acceptance of a divine plan. Louise Shedd also imbues her description with a tone which seems to hark back to the political aspirations of the American War of Independence, and which thus suggest that her hope is for the emergence of a more libertarian and independent Persia from the turmoil of war. She writes:

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<sup>192</sup> Louise Wilbur Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd*, 6.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-4.

What the Nationalists fear more than anything else, I guess, is treachery, for many of their followers haven't enough love of country to withstand cold and hunger, and one cannot blame them, either, for what has their country done for them? There is a real hope for something better that makes the Tabriz people hold out as well as a fear of something worse if they should surrender. Unless it could be in some way managed by foreign powers, a surrender to the "royal" ruffians that are investing Tabriz would be a terrible thing.<sup>195</sup>

This last line is interesting as it expresses the desire for foreign intervention only in as much as to manage a surrender, and as such it is emblematic of the American Presbyterian Mission's stance towards imperial power – not as an end in itself but as a useful means to avoid massacre. The American missionaries are in a sense dragged into the processes of imperial influence and expansion through an ethical concern for the nascent democratic Iranian nation. This was only Louise's hope, however, and the policy of the mission remained the maintenance of studied neutrality. Louise Shedd also describes how the United States flag was used as a symbol of neutrality in the divided city of Urumia by giving their servants a miniature flag sewn into their uniform to identify themselves.<sup>196</sup> The American Flag also served to mark out the mission property as neutral territory, as she describes:

It has been difficult to steer our neutral bark in such a troubled sea – what with Turks, Russians, Nationalists, Royalists, Constitutionalists, Armenians, Christians, Kurds. [...] It looked as though there might be a general mob, and we got a flag pole up over the gate in a hurry to indicate that this was foreign property, a proceeding of doubtful legality, without permission of the State Department, but there are times when one can't stand on ceremony.<sup>197</sup>

There were also, it would appear from her narrative, missionaries who in all good conscience could not maintain the studied neutrality which was the mission's policy, but these were compelled to leave the mission's service. She recounts the story of a Mr. Baskerville, one of the American missionary tutors in Dr. Wilson's school in

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-4.

Tabriz, who felt compelled to resign his missionary calling to fight with the Nationalists. Louise Shedd states of Baskerville's actions that:

It seems a foolish thing to do if you look at it in a cold-blooded way, but it is no wonder that a young man would want to throw in his strength in the struggle for freedom. Mr. Moore an English newspaper correspondent has also joined the Revolutionists and they are drilling 500 troops daily. Of course he has to give up American protection and is liable to be tried for insurrection if the King should come out on top – but we can't believe that [the Shah] will ever have the chance to "get even" with the revolutionists.<sup>198</sup>

The spirit of this description seems to be that of a great sympathy for the Nationalist cause combined with a steadfast determination to remain neutral in these events. It should perhaps be borne in mind that, as these letters were written primarily to family and friends, there may be a tendency to emphasise the neutrality of the mission in order to allay fears back home. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that there is no call for foreign intervention except in as much as to manage the surrender of Tabriz, presumably this is because the revolution is perceived to be a legitimate struggle amongst Persians for the future of their country which they must resolve for themselves. If this is the case then the missionary representations of the Kurdish rebellions of the 1880s and 1890s downplay these earlier struggles as lawless and illegal acts, and this perhaps reveals a certain prejudice against the semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes as somewhat less civilized than their Persian neighbours. In relation to the Iranian constitutional revolution it would seem that back home in the United States, however, there was a feeling that military intervention was an appropriate measure for the protection of Christians involved in the turmoil of these events. In a personal communication referring to her cousin, Curtis D. Wilbur,<sup>199</sup> Louise Wilbur clearly opposed his views stating that: "I don't agree with him that a modern battle ship is a good missionary",<sup>200</sup> adding that it "may stop persecution but it cannot enlighten, educate, or be a means of saving souls."<sup>201</sup> This is perhaps a good evaluation, and a vivid symbol, of the American Presbyterian Mission's overall

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-6.

<sup>199</sup> Curtis D. Wilbur was an attorney at the time but would become the U.S. Secretary of the Navy in 1924.

<sup>200</sup> Louise Wilbur Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd*, 234-5.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

stance with regard to the use of imperial power in the Orient, and is a statement, albeit a personal one, of the perceived limitations of temporal power in their eyes.

William Ambrose Shedd also speaks, in an equally personal letter, of the Nationalist movement in terms of a divine plan for a more libertarian and independent Persia. Speaking of the Nationalist volunteers in Urumia and Tabriz he states that he doubted “whether in all history a more motley cause and varied crew were ever dignified by the name of liberty. But God does not disdain to use very mixed instruments.”<sup>202</sup> As with his wife, Louise, he emphasises the path of neutrality which the mission was forced to walk in the interests of its ultimate religious purpose and he also mentions the use of the American flag as a symbol of that neutrality.<sup>203</sup> This idea of neutrality was nuanced only by the absolute lack of the rule of law and order which in William Shedd’s estimation warranted the intrusion of an outside authority. He describes the situation and the need as follows:

With no government, with Kurds about, with the most discordant elements, with intriguing Turks, we have been safe and I think that we are still safe. But we will welcome some force, Russians rather than Turks, that will put an end to the uncertainty and anarchy.<sup>204</sup>

William Shedd’s hope for a Russian occupation simply expresses his wish for some form of law and order and it should not be taken as an aspiration for the imperial expansion of Russia, which after all embodies the antithesis of the aspiration for liberty and freedom which the Presbyterian missionaries so applauded in the Nationalist cause.<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, the American missionaries frequently articulated the opinion that the actions of the Great Powers were a hindrance to religious mission and a potential danger to the security of the local Christian communities.

As a final point, Edmund McDowall, in a 1913 report on the progress of work in the ‘Mountain Field’, expresses to the Board his belief that the actions of the Christian powers of Europe have been a great provocation to the Muslim majority. Referring to

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<sup>202</sup> William Ambrose Shedd, *The Diary and Letters of Louise Wilbur Shedd*, 24.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. Letter dated May 15<sup>th</sup> 1909.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>205</sup> Also Shedd remarks that he would prefer Russian rather than Turkish intervention implying that Turkish intervention would suffice if no other force would intervene. This frames the statement in the context of an appeal for law and order rather than as an advocacy of ‘Western’ imperialism.

the recent wars in the Balkans, he frames these events in the context of divine providence:

Recalling the great fear which last spring hung so oppressively and persistently over the Christians, subject to Islam, it should awaken the deepest gratitude that we are able to report today that during two wars waged by Christian powers against the Turkish government our people have been unscathed. It can only be true, the word spoken to me by a blunt Kurd: "It was in our hearts to put the Christians to the sword but God did not permit it". This great deliverance from the hatred and wrath of Islam's inarticulate cry for succour in this her hour of humiliation and need ought to unite in their appeal to all Christian hearts to hasten the footsteps of those who bear the Divine message which will forever heal the animosities of the past, and breaking down the middle wall of partition between them will make in Christ, of the twain, one new man, so making peace. For so will He reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.<sup>206</sup>

This somewhat rambling sermon quite unequivocally puts the objectives of mission in terms of a divine plan and emphasises that the missionaries' sole purpose was to bring the message of God to both Christians and Muslims in the hope that they would become one people in Christ. This narrative deemphasises the importance of political activity to the point of irrelevance and carries with it no aspiration towards enculturation, it is a singularly religious aspiration. As such it is quite difficult to reconcile this sentiment with McDowell's earlier hope of setting up of some sort of protectorate over Kurdistan and Armenia. What I feel this demonstrates is the inconsistency of the various missionary narratives produced in a process of individual meaning-making which highlights their ability to selectively use ideas which belong to seemingly mutually exclusive discursive world-views. They would, in fact, appear to be attempting to reconcile their personal experience with the most satisfying axioms available with little constraint from any particular hegemonic discourse.

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<sup>206</sup> Edmund Wilson McDowell, *West Persia Mission. Mountain field. Evangelistic Report 1912-13*, RG 91: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968, Series II: West Persia Mission, 1911-1930. Subseries 3: Station Reports. Box 4. Folder 10.

In summary of this section it seems that, as with the Anglicans, the American Presbyterian missionaries displayed a diversity of expressions regarding imperialism and produced strikingly individualistic narratives of meaning. Nonetheless, there is an underlying uniformity to their expressions which can be summarised as a desire to establish an independent and free-thinking native evangelical Christian community within Persia and Ottoman Kurdistan. Equally, there is a strong sentiment that Persia as a nation should assert its independence as a patriotic but inclusive national polity. There are, however, some ambiguities present within these aspirations, for example, the independent Persian nation which would arise from its Monarchical and Islamic past is imagined, from the cultural point of view of the missionaries, as a Christian and democratic republic on the American model. While this is a good example of their ethnocentricity it does not, however, seem to constitute imperialism as a political project of domination as there was no attempt by the missionaries to use coercion to bring these changes about. Instead the mission was reliant upon the willing uptake of these principles by the local communities, the majority of whom it should be remembered did not choose to embrace Presbyterianism. Equally, there does not seem to have been any discernible political 'interest' served by the mission or its activities that could have benefited the dominant imperial powers of the day. Furthermore, it does not seem reasonable to posit the Presbyterian missionaries as representative of a uniform Occidental or even American culture – American culture being a far more diverse phenomenon than the particular ethics of the Presbyterian mission. Instead the American missionaries seem to have disseminated a bundle of egalitarian religious and ethical principles and ideas which were opportunistically and selectively taken up by the indigenous communities within Persia and the Ottoman Empire. It can be seen that some disagreement as to the acceptable level of recourse to political and diplomatic influence existed among the American missionaries, but such pressure was always invoked as a response to perceived oppression rather than the pursuit of an interest.

## Chapter five – Conclusion

This thesis set out to analyse the knowledge production of two particular Protestant missions which were active in the Kurdish region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The points of interest which inspired this study were the observations that these two missions seemed to have expressed divergent views as to the nature of the Orient, and that they adopted diametrically opposed methods in their missionary engagement with the region. This brings into question the discursive regularity of the Orientalist discourse which is often presented as somewhat monolithic.<sup>1</sup> In defiance of such discursive regularity, however, these two missions seemed to be articulating divergent conceptions as to the very nature of 'Orientals'. Moreover, the methods of each mission and their objectives positioned them ambiguously with regard to European imperial expansion. Therefore, in order to investigate these divergences and to better understand the specific and contextual nature of these two missions I set out to ask two connected research questions. Firstly, does the knowledge production of these missionaries exhibit an Orientalist style, and if so what form does this Orientalism take? Secondly, can they be considered agents of imperialism, either in their actions and rhetoric or as an indirect consequence of their knowledge production?

With regard to the first research question, I looked at terms and themes which express a perception of the Orient as a homogeneous and oppositional unit to that of the Occident. I also asked how meaning was attributed to this perceived difference between Orient and Occident, and examined the relationship between these narratives of meaning and the methods of the two missions. With regard to the second research question, I asked whether it was meaningful to consider these missionaries to be agents of imperialism in three different senses of the term; firstly, as the political agents of imperial 'interests'; secondly, as advocates of a pro-imperial sentiment, and thus producers of knowledge which could be considered pro-imperial in nature; and thirdly, as agents of cultural imperialism. The investigation of the Orientalist and imperialist credentials of these two missions in parallel also serves as a contextualisation of the Orientalist critique in a very specific setting. This

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<sup>1</sup> See: Chapter 1, section - *Missionaries in the Context of Imperialism*.



comparative method allows for a complication of the Orientalist critique in which variant and contradictory portrayals of the Orient can be identified. The contextualisation also presents the opportunity to untangle certain variant meanings of the term imperialist which are often conflated: in particular the understanding of an imperialist as an overtly conscious agent of a project which seeks to coerce versus a more nuanced understanding in which the act of representation contributes, often unintentionally, to the consolidation of power over the Oriental 'other'.

The observations of this study are as follows. In chapter three I demonstrated that the missionaries of both missions exhibited an Orientalist style in the manner of their representation of the region. This 'representational Orientalism' was characterised by the portrayal of the Orient as a realm of 'Mohammedan tyranny and oppression'.<sup>2</sup> The missionaries consistently represented the Orient in terms of a binary of opposition between a Muslim 'East' and a Christian 'West', in which the Occident was powerful and righteous and the Orient was weak and erroneous. The veracity of a 'Western' approach to Christianity was also represented by them as being validated by Occidental dominance, and the temporal weakness of the Orient was portrayed as indicative of the perceived failure of Islam and an erroneous 'Eastern' Christianity.<sup>3</sup> In addition to this I highlighted a tendency in these missionary narratives to make generalising statements about the existence of Oriental traits such as dishonesty, and an inability to reason logically. All of these features are indicators of Orientalism and can be observed in the knowledge production of the missionaries of both missions. It is thus reasonable to state that they exhibit an Orientalism in terms of their representative style, and to say that this is (in this limited sense) consistent with the Orientalist critique.

The Orientalism of these two missions was, however, shown to diverge when meaning was attributed by the missionaries to the differences which they perceived to exist between Orientals and Occidentals. I outlined that in the knowledge production of the Anglican missionaries the overriding tendency was to present Oriental difference as an ontologically fixed characteristic. The contention of this

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<sup>2</sup> By which I mean Orientalism viewed solely as a form of representation and which Nadia Abu El-Haj has described as "the question of how human societies distinguish between selves and others and with what consequences." Abu El-Haj, *Art, Land and Voyage*, 58. See chapter one – *Imperialism in Theoretical Terms*.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of the Anglicans this 'error' was limited to their understanding of the Nestorian heresy, whereas in the American Presbyterian case the whole of Eastern Christianity was represented as a 'dead' formalism.

particular world-view is that the differences observed in form and behaviour which are supposed to define the 'Oriental' should be understood as being rooted in an intrinsic and immutable Oriental nature. This particular style of 'othering' I have theorised as an Orientalism of *essential difference* and is in conformity with Edward Said's emphasis upon the intrinsic essentialism of the Orientalist discourse. In chapter one I pointed out that Said asserted that 'Orientals' were perceived by Orientalists as imbued with and informed by an essential nature which separated them from 'Occidentals'.<sup>4</sup> I also remarked upon the correlation between this particular style of Orientalism and the Anglican policy of non-proselytisation which was defended and justified in relation to these essentialist principles. I gave examples of how it was consistently argued by the Anglican missionaries that it was harmful for Orientals to be exposed to 'Western' culture on the grounds that it would undermine the stability of their Oriental nature.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, it was argued by the Anglican missionaries that it was vital to preserve an Oriental Christian institution, most specifically in the form of the Old East Syrian Church, which was suitable to the limitations of an Oriental spiritual and mental constitution. Furthermore, it was argued by them that only such an Oriental form of religious expression had any chance of converting the majority populations of the Orient to Christianity. It seems therefore quite reasonable to state that the Anglican missionaries of this study were archetypal Orientalists in terms of their adoption of a particular style of representation.

Conversely, I demonstrated that the American Presbyterians consistently expressed the view that the cause of Oriental difference was environmental; in the form of culture, education, and most importantly religion. This representation of 'Orientals' accepts their ability to productively assimilate both a putative 'Western' culture and the religious message of the American Presbyterians. I have termed this style of representing 'the Oriental other' as an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* and I noted that the American Presbyterians employed this understanding of difference in justifying both their proselytising activities and their projects of education in which 'Orientals' were taught in the same manner as 'Occidentals'. The underlying ethos of the American Presbyterian mission was expressed by them as an attempt to establish communities of believers in Persia and Ottoman Kurdistan which mirrored

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<sup>4</sup> See: chapter one, section - *Orientalism and essentialism*. See also: Said, *Orientalism*, 38.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter three, section - '*Restoration*' and *Essential Difference*.

Presbyterian communities in America. In short 'Orientals' were perceived to be 'perfectible' through the agency of 'Western' tutelage. This form of Orientalism, while betraying ethnocentricity, implies an underlying equality of the human spirit and the innate capacity of all individuals to aspire to the same level as the American missionaries. The evaluation of their Orientalism is thus problematic, because on the one hand they employ a mode of description and representation which is typically Orientalist but on the other they ascribe to these representations a meaning which is in conflict with those assumptions of fixed ontology which Said had asserted as characteristic to Orientalism. Moreover, as Hannoum has asserted in reference to the perception of the 'natives' of Algeria by the Arab bureau, the evaluation of their Orientalism is equally problematic because it does not present the Orient and Occident as mutually exclusive entities. However, I would argue that it does, though not in an ontological sense but in an anthropological one. Instead of the very essence of the Oriental opposing that of the Occidental it is the culture and religions of the Orient which condition the 'natives' to be oppositional to Occidentals. Thus the distinction between 'East' and 'West' can still be posited by the Orientalist but in this variant style of Orientalism the distinction can ultimately be broken down and the Orient erased. In a sense this style of representation is 'softer' on the 'Oriental' as an individual and 'tougher' on the Orient as a collection of ideas and values; in short, that is, as a civilization.

With regard to imperialism, I showed that the Anglican mission was politically independent from the imperial 'interests' of Great Britain in terms of funding and direction and that the objectives of the mission were also often in open conflict with those 'interests'. I also demonstrated that the knowledge production of the Anglican missionaries was a little ambiguous but, importantly, it did not consistently express opinions which were supportive of a pro-imperial sentiment. In fact the most consistent sentiment expressed by the missionaries of the Anglican mission was distinctly anti-imperialist and based upon understandings central to their Orientalism of *essential difference*. According to this world-view the fixed ontology of Oriental difference required the shielding of Orientals from the pernicious effects of 'Western' rationalism and republicanism. Furthermore, in terms of a conscious cultural imperialism it was seen that those very principles of *essential difference* were central to an argument which sought to assist the Old East Syrian Church in repulsing the

encroachment of a perceived 'Western' influence, and more specifically the advances of the American Presbyterians. As such it is difficult to conclude that the Anglican missionaries were imperialists in the sense of conscious activity.

However, if Edward Said can argue that such an ardent anti-imperialist as Joseph Conrad is also an imperialist due to the unwitting effects of his knowledge production, then it also follows that the Anglican missionaries of my study should be considered imperialist in this more attenuated sense of the term. Through the creation of essentialist representations of Orientals their knowledge production can be considered to be a form of symbolic violence, to use Guhin and Wyrzten's term, which, in conjunction with the disequilibrium of power inherent to the situation, distorts and disempowers the 'other' and is pliant to the processes of imperial expansion. In this respect, however, it should be borne in mind that the manner in which the Anglican representations of the Orient were framed overtly encouraged a somewhat anti-imperialist course of action; that is the isolation of the Orient from the Occident. Furthermore, the Anglicans also demonstrated a keenness to reproduce the knowledge productions of the Assyrian community in unedited form and showed a desire to allow the Assyrian Church to represent itself through its own institutions; aspirations and actions which do much to ameliorate the 'epistemic violence' generally associated with imperial and colonial endeavours.

As for the American Presbyterian mission, I outlined that it too was politically independent from the imperial 'interests' of its home nation (such as they were in the region) in terms of funding and direction; being a voluntary organisation of believers funded by private donation. I also demonstrated that the knowledge production of these missionaries was somewhat ambiguous in terms of the policies it advocated for the governance of Ottoman Kurdistan. In this respect I showed that various American Presbyterian missionaries called for a protectorate over the region, but only within the rubric of the protection of Christian communities against the perceived violations of their Kurdish and Turkish overlords; and importantly this was not presented by them as serving any imperial 'interest'. In fact, the entreaties of the American mission for assistance from their political representatives can be seen to have provoked action against the political interests of their home nation, and the notion of a protectorate over Kurdistan was seen as something of an onerous burden to the political officials of the British and American governments. A far more common

sentiment, however, was that articulated by the missionaries in relation to Persia. In this view many American missionaries were shown to advocate both the sovereignty of the Persian State and the ecclesiastical independence of the nascent Syrian Evangelical Community, and these would seem to be distinctly anti-imperialist aspirations.

With regard to cultural imperialism the American Presbyterians were not averse to disseminating both their religion and aspects of their culture. However, the voluntary adoption of the 'Gospel message' was a significant point for the American Presbyterian missionaries who expressed great concern at the possibility that some of those 'Orientals' who had converted did so disingenuously.<sup>6</sup> Such a concern would make the application of force to coerce conversion or the adoption of cultural norms counter to the most basic objectives of the religious mission. Therefore, while the American Presbyterian mission was not in favour of the isolation of the Orient, as were the Anglicans, their activities do not seem to constitute imperialism if it is conceived of as a conscious plan or political project. The American missionaries most consistently displayed a conscious anti-imperialism but an important aspect of the Orientalist critique is the identification of the unconscious and unwitting effects of knowledge production within a field of power. In this respect the American missionaries can be seen to have engaged in their own form of essentialisation through a representative style which I have labelled an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference*. Although this style posits difference as an anthropological rather than an ontological reality, it nonetheless serves to objectify the 'Oriental' in terms of the corrupting influences of 'Oriental' religion and culture. Furthermore, unlike the Anglicans, the American Presbyterian claims to truth serve to disempower traditional 'Oriental' forms of self-representation and consequently constitute a form of epistemic violence.

The above findings refer to the general consensus of views found in the knowledge production of both missions, but it is important to note that in both the Anglican and the American Presbyterian missions there were voices which defied the norm and resisted categorisation. Examples of this were demonstrated in chapter three, such as; the nuanced Orientalism of the Anglican Rev. Arthur Maclean, whose emphasis

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<sup>6</sup> See: chapter three, section - *Proselytisation and Circumstantial Difference*.

upon the corrupting effect of Islam seems to suggest a *circumstantial* explanation of difference; and the American Presbyterian Dr. Joseph Plumb Cochran's *essentialist* reference to the existence of a 'Syriac mind'.<sup>7</sup> It can be seen, therefore, that while it is possible to make meaningful categorisations and generalisations about each mission with regard to a collective voice, it must be borne in mind that these missions were made up of individuals whose narratives were not necessarily in complete agreement with majority views. This observation, of the divergence of individual knowledge production from both hegemonic cultural norms and from the collective voice of the mission, underlines the inescapable fact that the missionaries' narratives were to some extent individual creations. The identification of a collective voice points to the influence of social conformity and discursive pressure, but their individual productions would nonetheless seem to be both pragmatic and expressive of an individual volition.

My evaluation of the above findings is as follows. With respect to the missions themselves, neither of the two missions of this thesis can be said to fit unambiguously into the paradigm of the 'imperialistic Orientalist'. The Anglican missionaries produced narratives which can be described as Orientalist in terms of a style of representation but, as I argued in chapter four, neither their knowledge production nor the manner of their engagement with the Orient can be considered to be imperialistic in the sense of a conscious plan to dominate the Orient. Reasons for this assertion are that they worked for the promotion of an ecclesiastically independent Oriental Church and advised Oriental Christians to remain loyal to the existing temporal authorities. The hope which they articulated was that reinvigorating an Oriental Church would lead to the re-Christianisation of the Orient, but their ideas of *essential difference* required that this region must remain an Oriental space. Conversely, however, it is an inescapable fact that their narrative productions essentialised the Orient and Orientals in a manner which supports the thesis of the superiority of the Occident over the Orient, and that this in turn lends itself to what Guhin and Wyrzten refer to as symbolic violence. The symbolic violence of essentialisation is apparent in their representations but the epistemic violence of the representation of the 'other' which precludes local forms of knowledge is alleviated

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<sup>7</sup> For Maclean see: chapter 3, section - *Restoration and Essential Difference*. For Cochran see: chapter 3, section - *Proselytisation and Circumstantial Difference*.

somewhat by their keenness to allow the Syrian community and Church to represent itself as best it could. As for what Guhin and Wyrzten refer to as the violence of apprehension, it is difficult to know to what degree these missionary representations fed back into the mainstream culture and were co-opted to serve the more political interests of empire; or for that matter how this could have been avoided by the Anglican missionaries who already framed their narratives in an anti-imperialist world-view. What one can say, however, is that their representations, by positing the spiritual and cultural inferiority of the Orient, lend themselves to use in the service of pro-imperialistic justifications.

The American Presbyterians also produced narratives which are Orientalist in terms of the categorisation of 'East' and 'West' into a binary of opposition, but the manner in which this categorisation is explained conflicts with the essentialism of the Anglicans and with Edward Said's definition of Orientalism. Nonetheless, I think that it is meaningful to consider the knowledge production of the American Presbyterian missionaries as being Orientalist because it constitutes a style of 'othering' which rhetorically empowers the Occidental at the expense of the Oriental. The ramification of these observations is that we have two very different styles of Orientalism with contradictory meanings as to the nature of 'Oriental difference'. To consider the Orientalism of the Anglicans as being the same phenomenon as that of the American Presbyterians would seem to me to be quite frankly misleading, and as such it is of great importance to make a distinction between these two forms of Orientalism.

I have labelled the Orientalism of the Anglican missionaries an Orientalism of *essential difference* because it considers the causes of difference between Orient and Occident to be the result of an Oriental essence which is fixed in nature and which permanently separates the Oriental from the Occidental. It is this style of 'othering' which Edward Said claimed to be characteristic of Orientalism in his seminal work, but it is not the only way in which the causes of Oriental difference can be imagined or, as I have shown, in which they were expressed by Orientalists. The style of 'othering' employed by the American Presbyterian missionaries envisaged that Orientals were made of the same essential 'stuff' as Occidentals and that what separates humanity within this binary of opposition is the workings of different cultural environments. I have coined the term *circumstantial difference* to refer to this divergent strand of Orientalist imagining, and it is my suggestion that this style of

'othering' is, in this particular case, related to both the Orientalist discourse and the egalitarian principle of evangelical Protestantism which advocated global proselytisation. It also seems reasonable to suggest that an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* would be expressed by many other individuals who may be influenced by completely different egalitarian ethical points of view, such as that of the Arab Bureau as analysed by Hannoum, and the investigation of these other divergences from the Saidian paradigm of Orientalism would seem to be a worthwhile academic endeavour. The importance of making this distinction between an Orientalism of *essential difference* and an Orientalism of *circumstantial difference* is that the two styles of representation seem to give rise to entirely opposed visions of the possible future of the Orient and support entirely opposed forms of engagement with it. The Anglicans, for example, hoped to confine the Orient so that the nature of Orientals was not perverted by a 'Western' rationalism which the missionaries considered to be beyond the capacity of their essential nature. Thus the view of the Anglican missionaries of this thesis is a profoundly conservative ethos, but one which counter-intuitively led to a policy of 'cultural sensitivity' – although a rather patronising one. The American Presbyterian vision of a world united in Christ imagined that all the peoples of the world had the innate capacity to accept and internalise the same doctrines and education, and this egalitarian ethos seems to have led to a policy which sought to educate the peoples of the Orient to the same level as that of the Occident. The fact that the American Presbyterian missionaries saw themselves as the bearers of an elevated understanding of religion and culture may well indicate a certain level of ethnocentrism but their view could be supported to some degree by the efficacy of their medical and educational techniques, which were of considerable value to the lives of local populations and which seem to have been enthusiastically embraced by them.

This evaluation of the two missions relies upon a certain degree of generalisation and grouping in order for me to talk about each mission as somewhat simplified objects of knowledge, but an unmistakable aspect of this study is that individual variance of thought seems to be a constant feature of the missionary narratives presented here. Perhaps what can be taken from this observation is that generalisation and categorisation are useful tools in the analysis of the past but that a reification of those generalised concepts can lead us to make unrealistic



assumptions about the level to which social pressures and discursive formations determine knowledge production. It is interesting to speculate that the narratives of the two missions conform quite closely to the needs of their respective missionary tasks. The Anglican task of raising a 'fallen Church' for the purposes of ecumenical union fits neatly with a view of 'Orientals' as being in need of protection from 'Western' cultural penetration, whilst the American Presbyterian task of proselytising the world demands an egalitarian view of humanity. This correlation between task and ethos gives rise to the notion that the adoption of particular world-views is a somewhat pragmatic affair, and that the consequent portrayals of the 'other' are determined less by discursive pressure and more by the volition of the individual. The perceptions and experiences of any individual must of course be placed within the context of established discursive frameworks for those perceptions to be understood by others, but given the existence of a plurality of discourses within any culture the choices are still vast. The message from the evidence of the two missions of this study, therefore, would seem to be that they do not conform to a single monolithic Orientalist discourse because their tasks required them to perceive the Orient in a different light to that of politicians and diplomats whose mandate was more primarily concerned with interests of formal empire. This highlights the volition of individuals in the construction of their narratives but nonetheless maintains that discursive forces have an influential role in this process.

On a broader theoretical level, if we accept the above schema then we must re-evaluate Edward Said's claim that Orientals were necessarily perceived by Orientalists in terms of an unalterable essential ontology.<sup>8</sup> This may be true for some but it would seem that not all Orientalists are alike in their standpoint upon the nature of difference, and this in turn suggests that freedom to choose explanations from outside the Orientalist discourse was possible even in relation to something so central to the discourse as the very nature of Orientals. The evidence of this study reinforces the image of the Orientalist discourse as a diverse rather than a monolithic structure. Equally, the case study of this thesis shows a radical divergence from an expected norm of *essential difference*, and one can only imagine that there may be many more similar divergences from a hegemonic narrative in which Orientalists are presumed to view Orientals as the ontological 'other' to the Occidental. In order to

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<sup>8</sup> See: Said, *Orientalism*, 38.

theoretically accommodate this potential diversity of narrative expressions which are nonetheless Orientalist, I have turned to the ideas of Critical Discourse Analysis and the work of Jäger and Maier in explaining the interactions of discursive influences.<sup>9</sup> In this model, as has been stated, overall societal discourse is understood as a milling mass of discourses which are intimately entangled with each other.<sup>10</sup> The specific narrative of the individual is therefore the product of the collision of discursive forces (through acts of volition) which results from the unique experiences of that individual. There is therefore always some level of originality but also some level of collective voice in any narrative. In the case of the Evangelical proselytising aspirations of the American Presbyterian missionary movement the ethical and pragmatic consideration of the spiritual equality of mankind would seem to outweigh the essentialism so prevalent in the Anglican narratives.

With regard to the evaluation of the imperialism of the missionaries of this study, it becomes clear that disagreement over their status as imperialists is largely conditioned by the diversity of meanings which can be attributed to the term itself. Therefore, from a standpoint which assumes a conscious and active association with the projects of an expansionist imperial state, it is difficult to see these missionaries as imperialists. Furthermore, it could be argued that for the pejorative meaning of imperialism to retain its connotation of domination it is necessary that active coercion is an element in the process, and as was shown in chapter four both missions eschewed coercion. If, however, we regard imperialism from the point of view set out by Edward Said in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, particularly as regards his evaluation of such anti-imperialists as Conrad and Forster, it becomes clear that we should consider these missionaries in a similar light. While the missionaries of both missions expressed clear anti-imperialist sentiments, the nature of their knowledge production can be seen to essentialise the 'Oriental', in either an ontological or in an anthropological sense, and supports the broader Orientalist premise of the superiority of the 'West' over the 'East'. Both of these practices can be viewed as forms of symbolic violence and can lead to epistemic violence and the violence of apprehension as articulated by Guhin and Wyrzten. So, while the perceived political interests of the imperial states were often hindered by the

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<sup>9</sup> See: chapter 1, section - *The Concept of Discursive Interaction*.

<sup>10</sup> Jäger and Maier, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, 35.

assistance they gave to the missionaries, they were simultaneously drawn against their will into activities which disempowered a putative 'Orient'. In this sense the missionaries of this study can be categorised as imperialists in an unwitting and unconscious manner through the consolidation of a discourse which disempowers 'Orientals' qua 'Orientals'. In the Anglican case the inferiority of the Oriental is emphasised in an ontological sense which validates the necessity of specifically Oriental institutions which are seen as appropriate to their mental and spiritual inferiority; and while the sovereignty of an Oriental world is upheld it is on the basis of confinement and a sort of cultural quarantine. In the American Presbyterian case while the potential equality of the Oriental is maintained, the inferiority of the Orient as a cultural and religious space is emphasised; and in this case the equality of mankind is the ultimate goal but only at the expense of the erasure of the Orient as a cultural entity.

A further and associated point can be made in relation to the flow of causality between the activities of these missionaries and the consolidation of imperial power. It was shown that neither mission appeared to serve the political interests of the European/American powers of the day and that they were frequently viewed as a hindrance to imperial 'interests' by diplomats and embassies who were obliged to assist them. This is interesting because it reverses the flow of causality asserted by Said in which the political interests of the Metropole drive the activities of the periphery; and instead the power of the Metropole was enlisted to serve, and thus driven by, a moral agenda emanating from the experiences of the periphery. This perhaps underlines the notion that the career of empires is not necessarily driven by the logical and conscious political planning of a centralised elite, but is also regulated by the more emotional and discursive forces active throughout society; even in its most far-flung and unofficial outposts.

In chapter two I discussed those works which treat the role and significance of missionaries working in the region during the nineteenth century, and I categorised those works into three divisions; those which saw missionaries as unambiguous agents of imperialism, those which saw missionaries as individual agents of personal conscience, and those which presented missionaries as ambiguous actors. While the findings of my thesis are that the missionaries of this study cannot be seen as agents of imperialism in an active and conscious sense, neither can they be considered to

be entirely free agents of personal conscience. Instead they appear to be subject to the influences (rather than the dictates) of discursive pressures but that those pressures are numerous, diverse and include discourses which contradict the formal interests of empire. In this sense they fall into the category of ambiguous actors but, importantly, that ambiguity can be explained in terms of the variable ways in which we can interpret imperialism. If taken from the point of view of those who consciously and wittingly engaged in or encouraged the expansion of empires, then the missionaries of this study are not imperialist. If taken from the point of view of those unwittingly caught up in the processes of empire through the essentialisation of the Oriental as either an ontological or an anthropological reality, then they can be seen, in this attenuated sense, as being imperialists. The importance of this distinction is that to be an imperialist in the first sense of the term, as an active agent or supporter of political projects, carries with it a set of, by today's standards rather pejorative, value judgements of the individual in question. Whereas, the unconscious involvement in the processes of imperialism, while nonetheless significant in its consequences, carries with it an entirely different set of association with regard to the nature of the individual and their motivations.

In the case of the American Presbyterian missionaries it is tempting to interpret their enthusiasm to share their religious beliefs and technical knowledge (including civic values of political organisation) as a form of cultural imperialism. However, if by this we mean that the American Presbyterians consciously sought to *impose* their culture upon the local population then it seems somewhat implausible. They had neither the power to coerce enculturation, nor did they display in their knowledge production an enthusiasm for coercive methods. As such, the encroachment of aspects of their particular culture upon the peoples of the region in which they worked should be seen in the context of the volition and agency of those peoples to absorb new ideas, rather than the *imposition* of a dominant alien culture. By this standard of judgement the true value of the term cultural imperialism must surely be limited to the imposition of a cultural uniformity by State actors upon populations which it has the means to coerce.

However, if we consider cultural imperialism to denote something less political and embracing unconscious activities which enact the realities of disproportionate power in the realm of culture, then there is a case for considering the American

Presbyterians to be cultural imperialists. Their project to emancipate 'Orientals' from the chains of their religion and customs implies the erasure of the 'Orient' as a cultural space. Furthermore, an educational policy which seeks to replace traditional knowledge with the 'advanced' technical expertise of the 'West' is a clear example of 'epistemic violence'. Therefore, while relying upon the free choice of the 'native' population to adopt their values, the American project clearly engaged in the preclusion and destruction of local forms of knowledge and as such is a form of imperialism. The question as to whether this is a good or a bad thing, as it relies upon free choice and involves the acquisition of medical techniques that clearly improved public health etc., requires quite a different order of analysis.

To conclude, I have shown that the missionaries of these two Protestant missions displayed styles of representation which can be considered as Orientalist but that they did so in very different ways. The fact that the American Presbyterian missionaries were arguably Orientalists in their style of representation and yet expounded notions of the innate similarity which exists between Orientals and Occidentals is problematic to the model of Orientalism as a strictly essentialist discourse. Therefore it seems reasonable to state that essentialism, in the sense of seeing Orientals as a Platonic essence which cannot be productively changed, is not a definitional component of Orientalist narratives. I also demonstrated that neither mission should be considered as conscious agents of imperialism, but that they could be described as imperialists in terms of their involvement in discursive processes which unwittingly consolidate a textual attitude which constitutes a violence of essentialisation and contributes to epistemic violence. The broader message is that the Orientalist critique needs to be contextualised in each particular case in order to avoid making generalising assumptions about the nature of Orientalists.

In the case of the missionaries of this study I have found the critique of Orientalism to be useful in outlining a style of narration which represents the Orient as an oppositional concept to that of the Occident. By 'othering' the Orient and the Oriental, the missionaries were able to express their mission in terms of their self-identities as 'Westerners' with a duty to assist those perceived to be less fortunate than themselves. What needs to be borne in mind with regard to the use of the critique, however, is that the discourse of Orientalism is only one factor in the construction of

narratives on the subject of the Orient, and thus a more comprehensive understanding of our subjects is required in appreciating the meaning of their productions. Common motifs and generalisations about the nature of Orientals do seem to have been prevalent in the culture of nineteenth and early twentieth century European and American societies, but at the same time it seems reasonable to assume that individuals were able to draw from other sources if they so wished. Therefore, it would seem to me that the idea of a discursive pressure in the realm of culture and society which exerted its effects upon those writing on the subject of the Orient is a useful concept but, importantly, this force was not deterministic but influential. To this extent the critique of Orientalism could be productively enriched through a greater engagement in other micro-histories which would further contextualise the period of European/American imperial expansion.

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*Archbishop's Mission to the Assyrian Christians; 1879-1931. In 24 Volumes (AM1-24).*

*Assyrian Mission Papers (G3200 1).*

*Assyrian Mission Papers (G3200 3).*

Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS)

National Archive of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147, Pennsylvania.

*Record Group 91* of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. Secretaries' files: Iran mission, 1881-1968. Series II: West Persia Mission.

*Microfilm series FM10.*